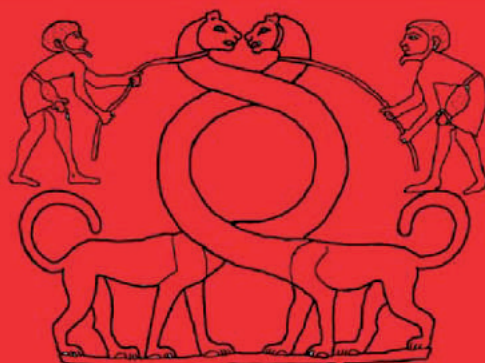


CUADERNOS DEL CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS DE
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ANTIGUO ORIENTE



Volumen 18

2020

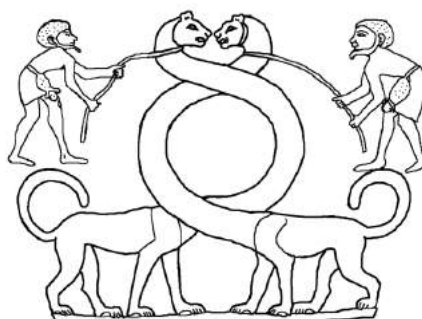
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ISSN: 1667-9202

CUADERNOS DEL CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS DE
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Dirección Postal

Centro de Estudios de Historia del Antiguo Oriente
Facultad de Ciencias Sociales
Universidad Católica Argentina
Av. Alicia Moreau de Justo 1500 P.B.
C1107AFD - Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires
Argentina

Internet: <http://www.uca.edu.ar/cehao>

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ISSN 1667-9202

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COLABORACIONES / MAIN PAPERS

<i>The Arabah Copper Polity and the Rise of Iron Age Edom: A Bias in Biblical Archaeology?</i>	
ISRAEL FINKELSTEIN	11
<i>And Yet, a Nomadic Error: A Reply to Israel Finkelstein</i>	
EREZ BEN-YOSEF	33
<i>New Radiocarbon Dates from the Edomite Highlands and the Hydraulic Systems of Southern Jordan</i>	
JUAN MANUEL TEBES	61
<i>Hittite Rock Reliefs with More than One Inscription</i>	
ANA ARROYO	95
<i>Some Thoughts on Xerxes's "Daiva" Inscription and its Interpretation</i>	
CLAUDIO S. HUAYNA ÁVILA	119
<i>Human Ritual Killing at Domuztepe and Ur: A Bataillan Perspective</i>	
ZACHARIAS KOTZÉ	187
<i>Scene of Fighting with Serpent(s) on the Old Assyrian Seal Impression from Kültepe (Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, I 2 b 1591)</i>	
ALEXANDRE NEMIROVSKY, VLADIMIR SHELESTIN & ANASTASIA IASENOVSKAIA	207
<i>Aspectos del tribalismo político en el Levante meridional durante la Edad del Bronce Tardío</i>	
EMANUEL PFOH	235
<i>Mumienporträts und verwandte Denkmäler: Klaus Parlasca y los textiles funerarios decorados del Egipto prerromano</i>	
JÓNATAN ORTIZ-GARCÍA	261
<i>An Industrial Zone and an Elaborate Winepress at Gan Ha-Darom, Israel</i>	
AYELET DAYAN, DIEGO BARKAN & IGAL RADASHKOVSKY	287

RESEÑAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS / BOOK REVIEWS

David Wengrow, <i>The Origins of Monsters: Image and Cognition in the First Age of Mechanical Reproduction</i> , 2020. Por SEBASTIÁN FRANCISCO MAYDANA	321
Antonio Sagona, <i>The Archaeology of the Caucasus: From Earliest Settlements to the Iron Age</i> , 2018. Por PABLO JARUF	325
Isaac Kalimi, <i>Writing and Rewriting the Story of Solomon in Ancient Israel</i> , 2018. Por PABLO R. ANDIÑACH	331
POLÍTICA EDITORIAL E INSTRUCCIONES PARA LOS COLABORADORES / EDITORIAL POLICY AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRIBUTORS	337
DIRECCIONES PARA ENVÍO DE ARTÍCULOS Y RESEÑAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS / ADDRESSES FOR ARTICLES AND BOOK REVIEWS SUBMISSIONS	341

THE ARABAH COPPER POLITY AND THE RISE OF IRON AGE EDOM: A BIAS IN BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY?

ISRAEL FINKELSTEIN
fink2@tauex.tau.ac.il
Tel Aviv University
Tel Aviv, Israel

Summary: The Arabah Copper Polity and The Rise of Iron Age Edom: A Bias in Biblical Archaeology?

In a recent article, Erez Ben-Yosef describes an ostensible bias in biblical archaeology—the emphasis on societies that left behind stone-built remains and a disregard for pastoral nomadic-based territorial polity. Ben-Yosef identifies the Iron I-IIA finds from the copper centers at Faynan and Timna as representing an early Edomite, non-sedentary kingdom. Here I deal with three issues: I begin by showing that most of Ben-Yosef's premises have already been suggested by scholars decades ago. I then turn to what I consider as major shortcomings in his theory. Finally, I present an alternative model for an Iron I-IIA territorial entity in the Arabah and neighboring areas as well as for the rise of the kingdom of Edom.

Keywords: Edom – Arabah – Copper – Faynan – Timna – State Formation – Negev Highlands – Tel Masos

Resumen: La organización política del cobre del Arabá y el surgimiento del reino de Edom de la Edad del Hierro: ¿una perspectiva sesgada de la arqueología bíblica?

En un reciente artículo, Erez Ben-Yosef señala un sesgo ostensible en la arqueología bíblica: el énfasis puesto en las sociedades que dejaron restos de construcciones de piedra y la desatención por organizaciones políticas territoriales basadas en el nomadismo pastoral. Ben-Yosef identifica los hallazgos provenientes de los centros de cobre en Feinán y Timna que corresponden a la Edad del Hierro I-IIA como representativos de un primer reino edomita, no sedentario. Aquí trato tres cuestiones: comienzo por demostrar que la mayoría de las premisas de Ben-Yosef ya fueron propuestas por estudiosos hace décadas. Luego me dedico a considerar lo que considero las mayores deficiencias en su teoría. Finalmente presento un modelo alternativo de una

Article received: February 29, 2020; approved: May 12, 2020.

Antiguo Oriente, volumen 18, 2020, pp. 11–32.

entidad territorial en el Arabá en la Edad del Hierro I-IIA y en las regiones aledañas, así como también sobre el ascenso del reino de Edom.

Palabras clave: Edom – Arabá – Cobre – Faynan – Timna – Formación del Estado – Tierras altas de Negev – Tel Masos

INTRODUCTION

Erez Ben-Yosef recently published an article titled *The Architectural Bias in Current Biblical Archaeology*.¹ He argues that Edom emerged in the Iron I in the Arabah Valley as a nomads-based kingdom that left no remains behind except for those that represented its mining and smelting activities in the copper industry centers of Timna in southern Israel and Wadi Faynan in Jordan.² From this he concludes that archaeological work in the Levant and the ensued historical interpretation have been biased, identifying state formation only in cases of developed urban centers and neglecting to accept the existence of nomadic territorial formations that leave negligible remains behind.

Ben-Yosef's work at Timna (as well as Thomas Levy's work at Faynan, where Ben-Yosef was a team-member) should be praised as being among the most important field projects that have been carried out in the Levant in recent years. Ben-Yosef's (and Levy's) contribution is in clarifying the history of copper production in the Arabah between the later phases of the Late Bronze Age and the Iron IIA (*ca.* 13th to 9th centuries BCE). In fact, their work reflects on the entire Levant and beyond.³ Yet many of the archaeological, anthropological and historical assertions which appear in the specific article reviewed here (some of the arguments appear in other Faynan and Timna-related publications) must be challenged.

This article is divided into three parts. I begin by showing that many of Ben-Yosef's premises are not new and were suggested by scholars decades ago. I then turn to what I consider as deficiencies in

¹ Ben-Yosef 2019.

² See already Ben-Yosef 2016.

³ On the work at Faynan, see the two volumes of Levy, Najjar and Ben-Yosef 2014; on Timna, Ben-Yosef *et al.* 2012; Ben-Yosef 2016; Yagel, Ben-Yosef and Craddock 2016.

Ben-Yosef's theory. Finally, I present an alternative model for an Iron I-IIA territorial entity in the Arabah and neighboring areas and for the rise of the kingdom of Edom.

IS ALL THIS NEW?

Ben-Yosef complains about the “overly simplistic approach applied to the identification and interpretation of nomadic elements in biblical-era societies.”⁴ This appears again later in the article, where he points to “the prevailing simplistic approach towards the identification of social complexity in societies with non-sedentary components.”⁵ Yet, what Ben-Yosef describes here as new insights about nomadic territorial formations is decades old. Such entities have been considered in relation to the ancient Near East in general and the Levant in particular starting in the 1960s. Michael Rowton pioneered the discussion of this topic in relation to the broader region.⁶ And specifically for the Levant and the arid zones examined by Ben-Yosef, I described a territorial formation of nomadic groups in the Negev Highlands in both the Early Bronze and the Iron I.⁷

Regarding the history of the south in the Iron Age, much of what Ben-Yosef proposes was already presented by Fantalkin and me almost 15 years ago.⁸ In another article titled *Invisible Nomads*, I specifically focused on nomadic societies and nomadic entities, which are attested in historical records of the Iron II and later, but which did not leave material remains behind.⁹

Regarding the connection between the copper industry in the Arabah and the collapse and revival of copper production in Cyprus, Ben-Yosef writes that (for Edom), “the break in the Cypriot copper flow created an unprecedented opportunity for the local tribes to make

⁴ Ben-Yosef 2019: 361.

⁵ Ben-Yosef 2019: 363.

⁶ E.g., Rowton 1973; 1976.

⁷ Finkelstein 1995; already 1988; 1991; for the highlands see Finkelstein 1992a.

⁸ Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006.

⁹ Finkelstein 1992b.

immense profit by producing copper for the starving local and global markets. The reestablishment of Cypriot hegemony over the Eastern Mediterranean copper production and trade, which was probably facilitated by the Aramaeans, was one of the main reasons for the end of the Aravah copper industry.”¹⁰ As a reference for this historical reconstruction Ben-Yosef cites his own article with Omer Sergi, published two years ago.¹¹ But the idea is not theirs; Axel Knauf proposed this almost thirty years ago.¹² The Cyprus-Arabah pendulum was then picked-up and expanded by Fantalkin and me.¹³

MAJOR DEFICIENCIES

Is this early Edom? I agree with Ben-Yosef that the remains at Faynan and Timna represent a territorial formation of desert groups. But why to see this as evidence of the early emergence of Edom of the Bible and the Assyrian records?

Ben-Yosef argues that “the relevant historical and biblical sources allow, if not support, the emergence of Edom in the geographical area of the Aravah, and that there is no basis for the prevailing notion that the core of Edom was in the area called today the Edomite Plateau already in its early days.”¹⁴ Yet, the biblical material clearly puts the heartland of Edom in the south Jordanian highlands. Both Sela (2 Kings 14:7a) and the capital of Edom Bozrah (e.g., Amos 1:12; today’s Buseirah) are located there. Ben-Yosef continues, saying that the region [the Arabah-I.F.] “was referred to as ‘Edom’ as early as the 13th century BCE ... and the people inhabiting it as ‘Edomites’ not later than the late 9th or early 8th centuries BCE...; thus, identifying the society reflected by the early Iron Age archaeology of the region as

¹⁰ Ben-Yosef 2019: 373.

¹¹ Ben-Yosef and Sergi 2018.

¹² Knauf 1991: 185; 1995: 112–113; the latter article is in fact cited by Ben-Yosef, but not in the Cyprus copper connection.

¹³ Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006. Incidentally, this article also discussed the idea of possible connection between Gath and the copper industry, later revisited by Ben-Yosef and Sergi 2018.

¹⁴ Ben-Yosef 2019: 371.

Edom is evidently the simplest interpretation.”¹⁵ Not really; why not place the Shosu of Edom of Papyrus Anastasi VI¹⁶ in the highlands? Also, if there are biblical verses which hint at the extension of Edom to areas west of the Arabah, they belong to late-monarchic or later times, when this situation was indeed a reality.

Still, could the Iron I-IIA Arabah people refer to their territorial entity as “Edom” after all? Since Ben-Yosef sees this copper producing polity as dominating large parts of the south—the entire Arabah and probably the south Jordanian highlands to its east and the Negev Highlands to its west¹⁷—I suppose that this is not impossible. But what about other options? Why not Midian, Amalek,¹⁸ Kedar (*e.g.*, Isa 21:16), Paran, Teman? We simply do not know the origin (including geographical extent) of these toponyms in the centuries *before* the composition of the biblical texts to which they are related.

Genesis 36

In order to justify the identification of the Arabah Iron I-IIA desert polity with early Edom, Ben-Yosef turns to the list of kings “who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites.” (Genesis 36:31–39). He sees this as “authentic materials on Edom before the days of David.”¹⁹ Yet, this is a Priestly list,²⁰ and if historical (the mention of “Bela the son of Beor” and the mix of regions is sufficient to make one wonder; note that Lemaire sees it as relating to Aram rather than Edom²¹), depicts realities not earlier than the late 6th or 5th centuries BCE.²² According to Knauf the background should be sought in local strongmen in the south after the Babylonian conquest of

¹⁵ Ben-Yosef 2019: 371, n. 46.

¹⁶ Kitchen 1992.

¹⁷ Ben-Yosef 2019: 365–366.

¹⁸ Kochavi 1982: 5 suggested identifying the town of Amalek of 1 Sam 15:5 at Tel Masos.

¹⁹ Ben-Yosef 2019: 363, citing Bartlett 1989 and Avishur 2007.

²⁰ *E.g.*, Knauf 1985; recently Nash 2018.

²¹ Lemaire 2001.

²² For a different view see *e.g.*, Lipiński 2006: 388–392.

Edom.²³ Incidentally, the only securely identified town in the list—Bozrah—is located in the Edomite highlands!

The Khirbet en-Nahas Fort

Ben-Yosef asserts that “the dating of the stone-built fortress [at Khirbet en-Nahas – I.F.] to the 10th century BCE has been rejected by scholars who ... could not accept the possibility that they [the nomads, I.F.] erected some stone-built walls as part of their defense and manifestation of power.”²⁴ This is not the case. There are four reasons for rejecting a 10th century dating of the fortress: 1) One charcoal sample found under the gate and two samples associated with its construction provided dates in the 9th century BCE;²⁵ this means that the construction of the fort must postdate this datum. 2) Certain similarities in the layout of the Khirbet en-Nahas fortress to Assyrian-period fortresses in the south, especially Tell el-Kheleifeh near Aqaba.²⁶ 3) The pottery of Khirbet en-Nahas, much of which dates to the Iron IIB-C.²⁷ 4) It is illogical to construct a fortress in the center of an active industrial site, in the midst of toxic fumes, when it could be built a few hundred meters away and achieve the same strategic impact. All this means that the fort probably postdates the copper production activity at the site (which probably ended in the late 9th century).

The Role of Tel Masos

Ben-Yosef dismisses any connection between the site of Tel Masos in the Beer-Sheba Valley and the contemporary copper industry in the Arabah. In his opinion, the idea that control over the copper industry

²³ Knauf 1985.

²⁴ Ben-Yosef 2019: 375.

²⁵ Finkelstein and Piasetzky 2006, based on Levy *et al.* 2004; 2005. As far as I can judge, the 2006 dates published in Levy, Najjar and Ben-Yosef 2014: 122 do not change the picture which emerged from the 2004 and 2005 articles.

²⁶ Finkelstein 2005.

²⁷ Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2008; 2009; *contra* Smith and Levy 2008.

was exerted from Tel Masos “is solely based on the presence of large, early Iron Age stone-built structures at this site and goes against the ceramic evidence and other considerations.”²⁸ He continues, saying that “Tel Masos is located in the eastern Beer-Sheba Valley, a region whose geography and history is distinctly separated from that of the Aravah Valley and the Negev Highlands.”²⁹ The available evidence does not support these assertions. The link between the Arabah industry sites and Tel Masos stems from three considerations: First, activity at Tel Masos dates to the Iron I and Iron IIA—in parallel to the peak period of copper production in the Arabah. Second, the excavations at the site seem to have revealed evidence for copper smelting and the site yielded an exceptionally large number of copper/bronze items.³⁰ Third, the location of Tel Masos (similar to Early Bronze Arad) at the northern limit of the arid zones, bordering on the settled land, fits interpreting it as a gateway community for the Arabah copper trade. Copper from the Arabah needed to be transported to the settled lands, including the coast, and the most convenient road passed via the Beer-Sheba Valley, with Tel Masos sitting on good wells in its midst.

On Comparison in Archaeology

Ben-Yosef states that “ethnography and textual evidence provide ample descriptions of nomadic societies, and although the typical and most common examples indeed attest to a simple form of social organization, there are exceptions. One of these is the well-documented case of the Mongol Empire, which started as a coalition of nomadic tribes under the strong leadership of Genghis Khan in the early 13th century CE.”³¹ I have already stated more than once that anthropology and ethnography can supply comparisons for every phenomenon in human history, in fact even pros and cons for a given case. Hence, resemblance

²⁸ Ben-Yosef 2019: 375–376.

²⁹ Ben-Yosef 2019: 376, n. 73.

³⁰ Kempinski *et al.* 1983: 21; Crüsemann 1983; Lupu 1983: 202–203.

³¹ Ben-Yosef 2019: 374.

should be considered only in view of unity of time and/or place.³² Comparing the Iron Age copper production in the Arabah to Mongolia is no better than linking Late Bronze Egypt-dominated Canaan, or the Iron I in the Levant to the Baringo district in Kenya.³³ In other words, in this case, too, it is advisable to stick to Rowton's articles on western Asia and to works on the Negev Highlands and vicinity, *e.g.* in the Early Bronze.³⁴

AN ALTERNATIVE SCENARIO

The surge and cessation of the Arabah copper industry in the Iron Age was indeed influenced by copper production in Cyprus and trade in the eastern Mediterranean.³⁵ Shipment of copper to the Levant by sea was easier and more efficient than land transportation through the desert. Hence, in the Late Bronze Age, with prosperity in Cyprus and peaceful marine trade in the eastern Mediterranean, production in the northern Arabah was seemingly minimal. Some activity took place at Timna in the south in the closing phase of the Late Bronze Age (13th and mainly first half of the 12th century BCE). This may signal the beginning of deterioration of eastern Mediterranean trade and the need in Egypt to find a replacement for Cypriot copper. Copper was probably transported from Timna directly to Egypt via the Sinai Peninsula.³⁶

The situation changed with the collapse of the eastern Mediterranean *koine* in the 12th century BCE. The Arabah replaced Cyprus as the main supplier of copper in the region and this, indeed, led to the emergence of a desert polity.³⁷ A major center for this activity could have been located somewhere in the Faynan area, perhaps at Khirbet Faynan. But the hub of this desert polity, that is, the seat of the

³² Finkelstein 2002.

³³ Finkelstein 2002, *contra* Bunimovitz and Faust 2001.

³⁴ Finkelstein 1991.

³⁵ Knauf 1991; 1995.

³⁶ On all this Yagel, Ben-Yosef and Craddock 2016; see also Erickson-Gini 2014.

³⁷ Ben-Yosef 2016; 2019.

tribal leaders who managed the copper economy, seems to have been located in the Beer-Sheba Valley.

Two phases in the Iron Age copper production in the Arabah can be identified; the dividing line between them was the intervention of Egypt of the 22nd dynasty in the area in the second half of the 10th century BCE.³⁸

The first phase can be described as the Formative Period, dated to the Iron I—from the late 12th to the middle of the 10th century BCE or slightly later. Two main copper transportation roads led from the Arabah to the north: one to Syria along the King's Highway in Transjordan and the other to the Mediterranean coastal plain via the Beer-Sheba Valley. Settlement activity related to copper transportation characterizes both arteries. A chain of fortified settlements in the Transjordanian highlands south of Wadi Mujib (the biblical Arnon) can be interpreted as representing an early “Moabite” territorial polity which grew along the former route in the late Iron I (late 11th and early 10th centuries BCE).³⁹ Iron I activity, which can be traced at Buseirah in the Edomite highlands “above” and close to Faynan,⁴⁰ may also be linked to this early phase of copper industry.

In parallel, a “gateway community” for the Arabah copper polity started growing at Tel Masos in the Beer-Sheba Valley, on the western copper transportation route, leading to the Mediterranean coast. The site is located on good wells, still in territory dominated by the desert groups, which allowed independence. It is also situated on the border of the settled lands, a location that was evidently advantageous economically. The tribal leaders of the desert groups could have acted from there, managing the trade affairs of their polity (similar, *e.g.* to the activity of the Rawala sheiks in Damascus in early modern times). Gradually (and perhaps not in the early beginning of the process), some of the groups, which were active in pastoral modes of life in the improved ecological niche of the Negev Highlands, began to settle

³⁸ Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006; Ben-Yosef *et al.* 2019.

³⁹ Finkelstein and Lipschits 2011.

⁴⁰ Bienkowski 2002, collared rim jar in Fig. 9.42, 12 and probably 17.

down. The earliest indications of this can be seen in Iron I pottery retrieved at some of the Negev sites⁴¹ and in the radiocarbon results from Atar Haroa near Sede Boqer.⁴²

The second phase in the south can be described as the full-blown activity period. It dates to the Iron IIA, starting sometime in the second half of the 10th century and lasting until the late 9th century. Copper production must have been intensified by the emergence of territorial kingdoms in the Levant.⁴³ No less important was the rise of the 22nd dynasty in Egypt. Growing demand for copper in Egypt, and possible ideology of “making Egypt great again,” led to the campaign of Sheshonq I to Canaan. The places noted in the Karnak list reveal that this campaign was directed at several specific regions, including the Beer-Sheba Valley and neighboring areas. Changes in production technology in the copper industry centers,⁴⁴ and the rare finding of a Sheshonq I scarab at Khirbet en-Nahas,⁴⁵ seem to indicate direct involvement of Egypt in the copper industry. The main goal was probably to monopolize it, including an attempt to direct much of the copper flow to the southern coastal plain and Egypt. The shift-to-the-west seems to have resulted in the decline of the early Moabite polity south of Wadi Mujib.⁴⁶ It also led to the weakening, or cessation all together, of activity at Buseirah and the region around it; so far there is no evidence of Iron IIA activity in this area.

The opposite happened west of the Arabah. Intensification in the copper industry and the rising importance of the road to the north-west brought about two processes. The first is the dramatic growth in activity and prosperity at Tel Masos in the Beer-Sheba Valley—the “gateway community” of the desert polity and, possibly, the seat of the tribal leadership. In the early Iron IIA Tel Masos (Stratum II) became the biggest settlement in the region. Its material culture—in both archi-

⁴¹ E.g., Cohen and Cohen-Amin 2004: Figs. 37: 8; 40: 4; 55: 9; *ibid.*: 133.

⁴² Boaretto, Finkelstein and Shahack-Gross 2010.

⁴³ Yahalom Mack *et al.* 2017.

⁴⁴ Ben-Yosef *et al.* 2019.

⁴⁵ Levy, Münger and Najjar 2014.

⁴⁶ Finkelstein and Lipschits 2011.

texture and pottery—indicates influence of the settled lands, but its layout, with many open areas, hints at the pastoral background of the inhabitants.⁴⁷ The second, related process was the intensification of sedentarization in the Negev Highlands, which peaked in the 9th century BCE.⁴⁸ One can think of a situation in which some members of the families/clans are active in the copper industry (production and transportation), while others slowly sedentarize in more amenable nearby areas: The extra income from participation in the copper industry enabled these groups to diminish animal husbandry and settle down. Grain was not grown in the Negev; it was probably imported from northern locations—the southern coastal plain, the Shephelah and the Beer-Sheba Valley.⁴⁹

How long Egypt continued to be present in the south depends on one's view on the 22nd dynasty's involvement in greater Canaan. Possibly, it lasted for several decades, until the early days of the 9th century BCE.⁵⁰ In the north, Egypt's dominant role was then replaced by hegemony of Omride Israel. In the south, throughout this period the main copper “trading partner” could have been Gath,⁵¹ which was the largest metropolis in the southern Levant,⁵² and one of the two hubs of alphabetic writing.⁵³ The situation gradually changed with the revival of copper production in Cyprus and the ensuing transportation of copper from the island to the Levant. As a result, the role of the Arabah centers as the leading suppliers of copper in the Levant and beyond diminished significantly. Activity in the Arabah copper centers declined and judging from the radiocarbon results ceased all together toward the end of the 9th century.

The dominant power in the Levant in the second half of the 9th century was the mini-empire of Damascus in the days of Hazael. In

⁴⁷ Finkelstein and Zilberman 1995.

⁴⁸ Boaretto, Finkelstein and Shahack-Gross 2010.

⁴⁹ Shahack-Gross and Finkelstein 2008.

⁵⁰ Ben-Dor Evian 2017: 36.

⁵¹ Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006, followed by Ben-Yosef and Sergi 2018.

⁵² Maeir 2012.

⁵³ Finkelstein and Sass in press.

order to best profit from the Cypriot copper trade to the east, Damascus had an interest in repressing copper production in the Arabah. The destruction of Gath contributed to fulfilling this goal.⁵⁴ As a result, activity at Tel Masos dwindled and finally ceased. Under Damascene auspices, Judah expanded to the Beer-Sheba Valley for the first time. The decline of the copper industry also brought about the disappearance of the many Iron IIA sites in the Negev Highlands. The miners in the Arabah, the inhabitants of the Negev Highlands sites and the groups that inhabited Tel Masos reverted to a pastoral way of life and thus disappeared from the archaeology landscape. Perhaps better said, some disappeared and some re-appeared in the highlands of southern Jordan—Edom to be.

Several processes characterize the south in the first half of the 8th century. The first is the rise to hegemony of the Nimshide dynasty in Israel. At that time, Israel dominated Judah and was active along the two desert trade routes: In the west, at Kuntillet Ajrud in northeastern Sinai. In the east, there are reasons to suggest that it dominated Edom.⁵⁵

But what was this Edom? The first appearance of Edom in the extra-biblical historical records is in the days of Adad-nirari III of Assyria, *ca.* 800 BCE. The earliest historical references to Edom in the Bible are the chronistic verses about Amaziah King of Judah's victory over Edom at Sela (2 Kings 14:7a) and Uzziah King of Judah, who "built Elath and restored it to Judah" (2 Kings 14:22)—both in the first half of the 8th century. I have recently suggested that Amaziah and Uzziah—not strong enough to act far from their hub in Jerusalem—intervened in Edom as vassals of Israel's Jeroboam II.⁵⁶ Turning to archaeology, several finds at Buseirah⁵⁷ and Tawilan⁵⁸ seem to point to activity slightly earlier than the "classical" Iron IIB-C. Tawilan produced a radiocarbon determination which falls in the late 9th/early 8th

⁵⁴ Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006, followed by Ben-Yosef and Sergi 2018.

⁵⁵ Finkelstein 2020.

⁵⁶ Finkelstein 2020.

⁵⁷ Bienkowski 2002: Figs. 9.39, 2–4, 8–10; 9.39, 1, 6, 9–10; 9.59, 4.

⁵⁸ Bennett and Bienkowski 1995: Figs. 6.19, 11; 6.33, 1; 6.35, 3; possibly 6.24, 7, 6.34, 8.

century BCE.⁵⁹ These early Edomites were probably local (highlands) pastoralists who settled down and possibly groups of pastoral nomads from a broader area, who were previously engaged in copper production in the Arabah. Sedentarization in the highlands was supported by a new stimulant of economic prosperity—participation in the lucrative Arabian trade under first Israelite (?) and then Assyrian domination, which replaced the copper industry in the Arabah.

SUMMARY

Following are points in which Ben-Yosef⁶⁰ agrees with my past interpretations:⁶¹

- Copper industry in the Arabah and transportation of copper to the settled land in the Iron I-IIA led to the rise of a desert polity.
- Prosperity in the Arabah commenced with the collapse of the Cypriot copper industry and trade in the eastern Mediterranean in the 12th century BCE and ceased with the revival of Cypriot mining and trade to the east in the 9th century.⁶²
- Egypt's involvement in the south following the Sheshonq I campaign brought about intensification of copper production in the Arabah.

My scenario differs from Ben-Yosef's regarding the following, essential issues:

- The very foundation of Ben-Yosef's scenario is erroneous: The Iron I-IIA desert polity is **not** devoid of stone-built remains. Apart from the copper sites in the Wadi Faynan and Timna areas, this is manifested in the remains of Tel Masos and the Negev Highlands settlement system. Tel Masos served as a “gateway community” for the Arabah copper and was probably the seat of the tribal leaders, especially in the Iron IIA. The late

⁵⁹ Smith, Najjar and Levy 2014: 287.

⁶⁰ Ben-Yosef 2019.

⁶¹ Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006; Finkelstein 2014.

⁶² First proposed by Knauf 1991; 1995.

Iron I system of forts in southern Moab may also be related to copper prosperity in the south.

- The hub of the Iron Age kingdom of Edom was in the southern Jordanian highlands. This area and the Arabah feature different (mostly conflicting) settlement histories: In the highlands, very little activity in the Iron I, no presence in the Iron IIA and prosperity in the Iron IIB-C; in the Arabah, prosperity in the Iron I and especially the Iron IIA.
- There is no way to know how the desert people related to their polity. Edom is one possibility, however unlikely. Other possibilities exist, *e.g.* Midian, Amalek, Teman.
- I see no biblical references to a historic, pre 8th century BCE Edom. Genesis 36:31–39 is a Priestly list which, if pertaining to Edom, depicts realities in the south after the Babylonian conquest. The description of David’s activity in Edom (2 Sam 8:14), taken by Ben-Yosef⁶³ as a genuine memory of affairs in the 10th century BCE, portrays the days of Jeroboam II, “retrojected” by a Judahite author back to the time of the founder of the Jerusalem dynasty.⁶⁴
- The kingdom of Edom emerged in the late 9th century, as a result of intensification of Arabian trade and as an outcome of the collapse of the Iron I-IIA desert copper polity.
- The Khirbet en-Nahas fort cannot date to the 10th century BCE.⁶⁵ It was probably constructed in the late 8th century BCE⁶⁶ and hence has nothing to do with the desert copper polity of the Iron I-IIA.

ADDENDUM

I am grateful to the editors for the opportunity to respond to Ben-Yosef’s rejoinder. Attentive reading of his article shows that many of

⁶³ Ben-Yosef 2019; also Levy *et al.* 2005.

⁶⁴ Finkelstein 2020.

⁶⁵ As argued by Ben-Yosef 2019, following Levy *et al.* 2004.

⁶⁶ Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2009.

my points were well-taken. But there is still a way to go before we put the issues to rest. Below I wish to emphasize a few methodological flaws in Ben Yosef's article—leftovers from his original *Vetus Testamentum* paper.

1. Ethnographic comparisons in archaeology: Ben-Yosef criticizes comparison of past Negev societies to the Bedouin inhabitants of the region in recent generations, which is based on geographical and (at least partially) subsistence unity. The reader is left to decide between the validity of this and Ben-Yosef's comparison—to Mongolia of the Middle Ages.

2. Historical comparisons: Ben-Yosef argues that textual evidence for pastoral nomadic phenomena in the Middle East presented by Rowton and others “do not provide a satisfactory solution, as they also suffer from relying on (limited) specific cases and extrapolations that do not allow any discussion of possible deviations.” I doubt it; but in any event, they provide the *only* reliable comparisons.

3. Uniqueness of the early Iron Age phenomenon in the Negev: According to Ben-Yosef this “is not simply another ‘nomadic territorial formation’ ... but rather a centralized polity that was based on a complex society and resembled an early *state*.” Fair enough; but I see no difference between the early Iron Age and evidence (including copper industry) for an Early Bronze III-early Intermediate Bronze polity in the same region.

4. Date of the Khirbet en-Nahas fort: Only three radiocarbon determinations decide the date of construction, one found under the gate and two associated with its building. All three provide results in the 9th century—the earliest possible date of construction. All other determinations can be interpreted as originating from samples taken from industry wastes associated with later fills. Moreover, the discrepancy between the radiocarbon dates for samples from the industrial waste (no later than the 9th century) and the pottery from the site (much of it dating to the Iron IIB-C) can be interpreted only in one way: industry

no later than *ca.* 800 BCE; fort not earlier than *ca.* 730 BCE.

5. Remoteness of Khirbet en-Nahas: The fort is “far from any important routes or strategic spots” only if one places it before the 8th century. Together with the contemporary fort at En Hazeva on the western side of the Arabah Valley, it guarded the highly important Assyrian-dominated Arabian trade route where it crossed the Arabah.

6. Tel Masos and a desert polity: Ben-Yosef speaks about the “disparate quality of the archaeological record of Tel Masos, which essentially represents a settled society” (to differ from a pastoral-nomadic entity). On the contrary; Tel Masos presents the ultimate evidence against Ben-Yosef “architectural bias” theory. Desert territorial polities do leave remains behind, unless an archaeologist declares these remains irrelevant to the discussion.

7. Timna and the Bible: As far as I can judge, Ben-Yosef’s work in the Arabah has no relevance for the study of Ancient Israel. In any event, dealing with this issue necessitates a different set of analytical approaches from those needed for deciphering archaeological remains in the desert, including biblical exegesis and intimate knowledge of the archaeology of the settled parts of the Levant.

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AND YET, A NOMADIC ERROR: A REPLY TO ISRAEL FINKELSTEIN

EREZ BEN-YOSEF
ebenyose@tauex.tau.ac.il
Tel Aviv University
Tel Aviv, Israel

Summary: And Yet, a Nomadic Error: A Reply to Israel Finkelstein

Israel Finkelstein's detailed criticism¹ of my 2019 publication "*The Architectural Bias in Current Biblical Archaeology*"² provides an opportunity to further clarify my arguments, and to deepen the discussion on issues related to the early Iron Age archaeology of the Arabah and nearby regions. In addition to pointing out specific problems in Finkelstein's treatment of the archaeological evidence—the dating of Khirbat en-Nahas fortress, the material culture of Tel Masos and more—I elaborate on my main argument regarding the prevailing methodological deficiencies in the interpretation of biblical-era nomads. I maintain that the chance discovery of a strong nomadic polity in the Arabah, whose existence is known to us solely because of its engagement in the archaeologically-visible copper production activities, necessitates a revision in the common treatment of nomads in archaeology-based historical reconstructions. The basic conclusion is that archaeology is inadequate for providing any substantial historical and social insights regarding mobile societies; and while it might be frustrating to scholars who use archaeology as history, adhering to notions about nomadic existence that have not changed much since the days of William Foxwell Albright is not conducive to the quest for accurate historical realities (to the degree that these even exist).

Keywords: Nomadism – Biblical archaeology – State formation – Edom – Arabah – Copper – Timna – Faynan – Khirbat en-Nahas – Negev Highlands – Tel Masos

Resumen: Y aún así, un error nómade: una respuesta a Israel Finkelstein

La crítica detallada que desarrolla Israel Finkelstein³ sobre mi publicación del 2019

Article received: August 12, 2020; approved: November 11, 2020.

¹ Finkelstein 2020.

² Ben-Yosef 2019.

³ Finkelstein 2020.

“*The Architectural Bias in Current Biblical Archaeology*”⁴ me provee la oportunidad para clarificar mis argumentos y profundizar en la discusión de temas relacionados con la arqueología de inicios de la Edad de Hierro del Arabá y sus regiones aledañas. Además de indicar los problemas específicos que presenta el manejo de la evidencia arqueológica que realiza Finkelstein—la datación de la fortaleza de Khirbat en-Nahas, la cultura material de Tel Masos y demás—, desarrollo mi argumento principal respecto de las deficiencias metodológicas que predominan en la interpretación de los nómades del período bíblico. Sostengo que el descubrimiento casual de un estado nómade en el Arabá, cuya existencia conocemos únicamente por la relación que entabla con la producción de cobre arqueológicamente visible en la región, requiere una revisión del tratamiento tradicional que se realiza de los nómades en las reconstrucciones históricas que se basan en descubrimientos arqueológicos. La conclusión esencial establece que la arqueología resulta inadecuada para proveer cualquier tipo de conocimiento social e histórico significativo respecto de las sociedades móviles. Aunque pueda resultar frustrante para los estudiosos que utilizan la arqueología como historia, la adhesión a nociones de la existencia nómádica que no han sido sustancialmente modificadas desde los días de William Foxwell Albright, no resulta conducente para la búsqueda rigurosa de realidades históricas concretas (en el grado en que estas siquiera existan).

Palabras clave: Nomadismo – Arqueología bíblica – Formación del Estado – Edom – Arabá – Cobre – Timna – Feinán – Khirbat en-Nahas – Tierras altas de Negev – Tel Masos

INTRODUCTION

Recently, I published a paper entitled “The Architectural Bias in Current Biblical Archaeology” that deals with prevailing methodological deficiencies in the treatment of nomads in archaeology-based historical reconstructions.⁵ Such reconstructions are often presented by archaeologists in a conclusive manner (below), amplifying interpretational biases in related disciplines in which there is less awareness of the inherent difficulties in using archaeology as a historical auxiliary (hence I chose to publish in *Vetus Testamentum*).⁶ The flaws in the common interpretation of biblical-era nomads had become apparent as a

⁴ Ben-Yosef 2019.

⁵ Ben-Yosef 2019.

⁶ Cf. Japhet 2001, who criticizes the unthinking use of archaeology as history, in particular by Israeli archaeologists who engage in biblical scholarship.

result of recent research in the Arabah, and accordingly the paper focused on the archaeology of the region and the emergence of ancient Edom. In following publications I elaborated further on the implications of the methodological conclusions on the study of other nearby polities of potential nomadic origin, including ancient Israel at the time of “the Settlement” and the “United Monarchy.”⁷

A criticism of my *Vetus Testamentum* paper published by Israel Finkelstein in this issue⁸ provides an opportunity to further clarify my arguments, and to deepen the discussion on issues related to the early Iron Age archaeology of the Arabah and nearby regions. Finkelstein worked extensively on the archaeology of the Southern Levantine deserts from this period, and his publications often present synthetic historical reconstructions based on the available archaeological data.⁹ However, although my recent publications indeed challenge the typical means used by archaeologists to convert archaeology into historical narratives (in fact, they demonstrate that in the vast majority of cases that involve nomads, there is simply no reliable way of doing so), it is important to note that the interpretational flaws that I discuss are not restricted to Finkelstein’s work or others of the more “critical” scholars; rather, they cut across all schools of biblical archaeology, skewing interpretations presented by “conservative” scholars to no less effect.

This paper is divided into two parts. The first will discuss the broader question of nomads in biblical archaeology and the new methodological insights, including how they differ from previous considerations of this issue. The second will address specific problems in Finkelstein’s treatment of the archaeology of the south (the Negev, the Arabah and the Edomite Plateau) and difficulties in his historical reconstruction, including examples of what I term *architectural bias*.

⁷ Ben-Yosef 2021; forthcoming.

⁸ Finkelstein 2020.

⁹ Finkelstein often publishes interpretations of new data even before the team working on producing them does (e.g., Finkelstein 2005; Finkelstein and Piasezky 2008). Written in a conclusive and authoritative manner such as they are, these publications often become key references even after the database itself (or the understanding of its context) changes with the progress of the research by which it was obtained.

RETHINKING NOMADS

The extraordinary case of the archaeology of copper production in the Arabah presents a unique opportunity to investigate a nomadic society in unprecedented detail. In contrast to Finkelstein's understanding, it is not that this nomadic society "left no remains behind except for those that represented its mining and smelting activities,"¹⁰ but rather that the nomads' engagement in these activities left behind remains that enabled the study of their social structure and other aspects of their life to a degree that is unachievable based on *typical* archaeological evidence of nomads. It is difficult to detect nomads in the archaeological record—in fact, it was Finkelstein who stressed their invisibility even in desert landscapes¹¹—and even if some remains, such as pens and tent clearings, are detected, it is extremely challenging to precisely date them. Gleaning from such finds any meaningful insights on the nomads' social organization, let alone their historical impact, is basically impossible, and accordingly there has been a heavy reliance on Bedouin ethnography in the scholarly literature.

This includes Finkelstein's work. His contribution to the issue of biblical-era nomads have shaped key aspects of biblical archaeology, most notably those related to the archaeology of the Settlement period.¹² It concerns both historical reconstructions, such as his now widely-accepted view that early Israel emerged from a population of pastoral nomads that occupied the highlands, and methodological considerations, such as the invisibility of nomads mentioned above, and his notion of a "nomadic-sedentary continuum"¹³—namely that the transition into sedentary life was gradual and included the existence of mixed, polymorphous societies (evidently only partially visible archaeologically). However, in attempting to reconstruct social realities, Finkelstein has adhered to and promoted the use of modern Bedouin society as a model for understanding biblical-era nomads in general,

¹⁰ Finkelstein 2020: 12.

¹¹ Finkelstein 1992a (but see a differing view in Rosen 2017).

¹² E.g., Finkelstein 1994.

¹³ Cf. Cribb 1991.

and the Israelite tribes in particular.¹⁴ The gist of this approach and its “romantic appeal” are exemplified in the introduction to the book he edited with Zeev Meshel, *Sinai in Antiquity* (1980):¹⁵

*In the Sinai, history is not only a matter of the past. The current occupants—the Bedouins—, belong in our opinion to the past more than to the present... the secret dream of some of the researchers is to actually meet one day the people of the period they study. A meeting with the Bedouins is almost a fulfillment of this dream and the analogy is illustrative and instructive.*¹⁶

Given the fact that, generally speaking, the Bedouin tribes occupy the same regions that are at the focus of biblical archaeology and biblical scholarship, it is easy to understand how their use as an ethnographic model became so entrenched in both disciplines.¹⁷ However, while the ways of life of Bedouins in the recent past—and especially those documented before World War I¹⁸—might reflect certain aspects of nomadic life pertinent to the *longue durée* of the region, the overwhelming weight given to Bedouin ethnography in research on biblical-era nomads has resulted in a very limited spectrum of interpretational possibilities, hindering any consideration of exceptions. Moreover, even studies that attempt to widen this spectrum by considering ethnography of other nomadic societies from the greater Middle East and textual evidence—such as those published by Michael Rowton in the 1970s¹⁹ (and

¹⁴ See in particular Finkelstein and Silberman 2002.

¹⁵ Finkelstein and Meshel 1980: 7–8.

¹⁶ My translation.

¹⁷ Examples are abundant; noteworthy are the recent books by van der Steen (2013) and Bailey (2018). The use of Bedouins to illustrate Bronze and Iron Age nomads is so prevalent that it is often done without full consideration and sometimes even unconsciously. The Arabic word “Bedouin” is freely used to translate the words for nomads (or more generally mobile people) in ancient texts (e.g., Durand 1998), and the title “Bedouins” is given readily and without explanation to nomads of the period in conference lectures, in-class discussions and even the scholarly literature (e.g., “Shosu bedouin” in Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 332, probably following Givon 1971).

¹⁸ Rowton 1976: 220.

¹⁹ E.g., Rowton 1976.

cited by Finkelstein to claim that my insights are “decades old”)²⁰—do not provide a satisfactory solution, as they also suffer from relying on (limited) specific cases and extrapolations that do not allow any discussion of possible deviations. In fact, the assumption that ethnography or historical accounts (always written from the perspective of the sedentary) cover all possible explanations for nomadic existence in antiquity is nonsensical, especially given the well-known limitations of the available evidence; and while one can understand the need to base conclusions on some sort of tangible data, in the case of nomads it would have been better to take into account the possibility of unknown unknowns,²¹ rather than to adopt a positivist approach.

Exceptions

Recent research in the ancient copper production districts of the Arabah revealed that exceptions to the prevailing interpretations of nomads should indeed be taken into consideration in historical reconstructions. The early Iron Age archaeology of the mining and smelting sites represents something different from what we thought we knew about biblical-era nomads. It is not simply another “nomadic territorial formation” such as those that had been identified before,²² but rather a centralized polity that was based on a complex society²³ and resembled an early *state*.²⁴ One should remember that until not so long ago the same archaeological record was consensually interpreted as representing imperial activities—the Neo-Assyrian Empire in Faynan and the New Kingdom of Egypt in Timna—and that the work of recent years has

²⁰ Finkelstein 2020: 13.

²¹ After Donald Rumsfeld’s briefing to the Defense Department of the United States of America, February 12th 2002.

²² *E.g.*, Finkelstein 1995; 1992b.

²³ Levy 2007, Levy *et al.* 2008; 2014a.

²⁴ Ben-Yosef 2019, f.n. 23. While it is beyond the scope of the present paper to discuss the exact definition of the early Edomite polity in terminology used in social archaeology, it is worth noting that this polity had early on all the characteristics that biblical authors saw in a *kingdom* (and see more in Ben-Yosef forthcoming).

provided even more evidence for the complexity of early Iron Age copper production and the social organization associated with it.²⁵

However, no less important to the discussion at hand is the realization that the only reason this interpretation was possible in the first place is the nomads' engagement in the unique activities of copper production, and that in any other scenario we simply could not have known about the level of complexity of their society, if it was even possible to detect and properly date their mere presence. The quality of the archaeological record—with the thousands of mines that scarred the landscape and smelting camps with large mounds of waste that resulted from repeated visits to the same exact site—provides an unparalleled window into the reality of a nomadic society at the turn of the 1st millennium BCE; in addition to the evidence of systematic, large-scale and sustainable production efforts we can for the first time study in detail thick layers of nomadic material culture, which in Timna also contain organic remains in unprecedented preservation conditions. None of this was available to previous scholars, including those who were working on nomads of the Southern Levant and Rowton and others who studied nomads based on a broader set of evidence.

It is also worth noting that within the *longue durée* of the Southern Levant the early Iron Age witnessed exceptional conditions that were conducive for the accumulation of exceptional power by typically-marginal societies such as nomads. The end of the long-lasting Egyptian hegemony in the region, the desertification of certain areas due to worsening climate conditions and the break of the Bronze Age trade systems and monopolies on certain goods created an opportunity for nomadic tribes to gain power by joining together to form strong political entities. In the case of the Arabah and neighboring regions (the Negev Highlands and the Edomite Plateau) this opportunity also involved the potential to generate immense profit from copper produc-

²⁵ See a detailed summary in Ben-Yosef 2019. Observations based on technology were further discussed in Ben-Yosef *et al.* 2019, and those based on textile remains in Sukenik *et al.* 2021. The latter includes evidence for the use of textiles dyed with royal purple (*Murex* snails) by the nomadic elite in the late 11th century BCE.

tion surrounded by a safe trading zone in a period following the collapse of Cypriot control over this industry.²⁶

Architectural Bias

The case of the Arabah has significant implications for archaeology-based historical reconstructions related to nomads, as it raises the possibility that other exceptionally strong and historically-influential nomadic entities existed without leaving behind any substantial remains. In other words, it reveals an inherent flaw in the prevailing “procedure” used by biblical archaeologists to produce historical narratives, one that generates a bias “in favor” of the settled in the identification and characterization of a society’s role in the history of the region.

To encapsulate this problem I use the term “architectural bias” in a generalizing sense, in which “architectural” represents the sedentary and their particular archaeological qualities. Evidently, nomads were capable of building varied types of stone structures to fulfill changing needs (defensive walls, landmarks, corrals), as is the case in the early Iron Age Arabah and the Negev Highlands.²⁷ However, those would still represent a completely different archaeology, devoid of destruction layers and any significant accumulation of waste—the bread and butter of archaeologists who try to reconstruct social and his-

²⁶ As Finkelstein (2020: 14) notes, Knauf (1991: 185) indeed pointed out the possible pendular connection between the Cypriot and Arabah copper industries, but the recent major revision in the chronology of the mining activities in the Arabah makes his observations obsolete. Finkelstein (2020: 14) uses the missing reference to Knauf in Ben-Yosef and Sergi (2018) to hint that we took credit of an idea which is not ours; however, in that work we focused on studies that took into consideration the revised chronology (including building on the ideas of Finkelstein and Fantalkin [2006]), with no intention of providing a comprehensive survey of the history of research on metal trade in the Eastern Mediterranean. Such a survey would have easily demonstrated that Finkelstein (2020) and Fantalkin and Finkelstein (2006) missed earlier treatments of “the Cyprus-Arabah pendulum,” such as that of Liverani (1987: 70) who already proposed a swing between Cypriot and Arabah copper at the start of the Iron Age.

²⁷ Finkelstein’s (2020: 23) statement that “the very foundation of Ben-Yosef’s scenario is erroneous: The Iron I-IIA desert polity is not devoid of stone-built remains” is probably based on a narrow or literal treatment of the term; I am glad to have this opportunity to provide further clarifications.

torical realities. In the same way, when I discuss the interpretational bias that stems from focusing on the “architectural” I refer not only to the interpretations of the architecture itself (buildings’ monumentality, massiveness of defense walls), but also to the incomparable richness of the archaeological record of the sedentary.

The disparity between the qualities of the archaeological records is nothing new. Nevertheless, because Bedouin ethnography and other preconceptions regarding biblical-era nomads are used almost instinctively to fill the gap in archaeological substance, this disparity is often not properly discussed in research, and in synthetic historical reconstructions it is not fully disclosed, leading to the false impression that the quality of the archaeological record upon which they are based is homogenous.²⁸

The architectural bias is, in its essence, the manifestation of the limited spectrum of interpretational possibilities considered by archaeologists in their treatment of biblical-era nomads, which, as explained above, does not typically include any consideration of highly complex nomadic social organization.²⁹ While examples of the prevalence of this bias are discussed elsewhere,³⁰ in the context of the present paper it is worth noting that even the *conclusive manner* in which archaeologists often present historical reconstructions that involve nomads exemplifies this exact bias; this is because if the interpretational spectrum had been wide enough to contain multiple forms of nomadic

²⁸ A prominent example is the archaeology-based historical reconstructions of the United Monarchy (e.g., Finkelstein and Naaman 1994). It is informative for the discussion at hand in two ways: 1) The underlying assumption that a strong polity (a monarchy) has to be based on a completely sedentarized population is yet another manifestation of the common flat perception of biblical-era nomadic societies discussed above (it has nothing to do with the biblical accounts nor with the archaeological record itself); and 2) the use of the rich archaeology of Philistia to argue for the weakness of the 10th cent. BCE polity in the region of Judah ignores the expected disparity between the archaeological records of societies of completely different origins, one urban/settled, the other nomadic. For a detailed discussion of this example, see Ben-Yosef 2021; forthcoming.

²⁹ As it is well-accepted that many of the Southern Levantine Iron Age polities—including ancient Israel—had their origin in tribal-nomadic societies, the possible effect of this bias on biblical archaeology (and consequently also on biblical scholarship) cannot be overstated.

³⁰ Ben-Yosef 2019; 2021; forthcoming.

existence and exceptional cases, no archaeology-based reconstruction could have been presented so conclusively. Finkelstein's historical reconstructions, including his "alternative scenario" for the early Iron Age Arabah and the emergence of Edom,³¹ illustrate nicely this very issue (below).

IRON AGE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE SOUTH AND ITS INTERPRETATION

Regarding Finkelstein's specific remarks on the archaeology of the south (the Negev, the Arabah and the Edomite Plateau), and his alternative interpretation, the following should be noted.

Why Edom

Regarding the identification of the early Iron Age archaeology of the south with Edom³² Finkelstein asks "why not Midian; Amalek, Kedar, Paran, Teman?,"³³ suggesting that all these biblical entities are equal candidates. This is of course a rhetorical question for him (he sees all these references as representing a much later reality), intended to illustrate his argument that the identification with Edom derives from a literal reading of the Bible. But this is not the case. In contrast to all the other biblical names that Finkelstein invokes, it is only Edom that is mentioned in non-biblical sources from the periods under discussion. Moreover, while it is true that the available non-biblical references—the Egyptian (13th cent. BCE)³⁴ and Assyrian (late 9th/early 8th cent. BCE)³⁵—do not provide a specific geographic location within the broader south, it is the fact that they are similarly not restricted to the

³¹ Finkelstein 2020.

³² It is worth noting that in addition to the excavators of the Arabah sites (Levy *et al.* 2008; Ben-Yosef *et al.* 2012; Levy *et al.* 2014b), this identification is now accepted by many other scholars (e.g., Mazar 2014; Hensel 2021: 78; Maeir in press), including Nadav Na'aman (2015), whose approach to biblical archaeology cannot be regarded as conservative.

³³ Finkelstein 2020: 15.

³⁴ Kitchen 1992.

³⁵ Millard 1992.

Edomite Plateau³⁶ that is telling; the emerging archaeological picture of a supra-regional entity, which included the Arabah *as well as* the Negev Highlands and the Edomite Plateau, makes the identification of this entity with the Assyrian reference almost straightforward. The 13th cent. BCE Egyptian source might indeed refer to a narrower region, possibly—as Kitchen suggests³⁷—in the vicinity of the southern Arabah, where the Egyptians were involved in copper production at this time. Following the Egyptian withdrawal from the region in the mid-12th century BCE, the emerging nomadic polity had to be associated with a certain supra-tribal title; the Assyrian reference to “Edom” as one of the subjugated states³⁸ in the days of Adad-nirari III (*ca.* 800 BCE), strongly suggests that this title was indeed *Edom*.³⁹

The difficulty that some scholars have with the identification of the early Iron Age archaeology of the Arabah with Edom⁴⁰ is also related to the gap in the available archaeological data in the 8th century BCE. According to these scholars, this gap suggests a discontinuity between the early Iron Age polity and the late Iron Age Edomite Kingdom (the latter’s identification with the archaeology of the Edomite Plateau is under scholarly consensus). However, this should, in fact, be seen as yet another manifestation of the architectural bias. There is no reason to assume that the gap represents an occupational discontinuity, or even a weakening of the nomadic polity (let alone its total “collapse”).⁴¹ The changing geopolitical circumstances, which brought the copper industry

³⁶ In the modern sense of the term, namely the southern Jordanian highlands.

³⁷ Kitchen 1992: 27.

³⁸ Millard 1992: 35.

³⁹ In turn, the adoption of this title by a nomadic polity whose economy was centered around copper production might support the idea that originally the term referred to a region in which copper production was practiced. For more on the identity creation of the early Edomites—especially in regard to the possible “trade union” role of the emerging polity—see recently Maeir *in press*.

⁴⁰ *E.g.*, Porter 2019: 314.

⁴¹ For example, Finkelstein’s (2020: 24) recent historical reconstruction for the region: “...the kingdom of Edom emerged [...] as an outcome of the collapse of the Iron I-IIA desert copper polity.” See more on the common, simplistic conflation between oscillations in archaeological visibility and changing degrees of social complexity in Ben-Yosef 2021.

to an end, simply rendered the still nomadic population archaeologically-invisible. Moreover, it is also reasonable to assume that some portion of the population (it is impossible to tell the exact proportions) stayed nomadic (namely archaeologically-invisible) even when other portions went through a sedentarization process on the Edomite Plateau starting in the second half of the 8th cent. BCE (when the region was under Assyrian domination). Thus, even for the later part of the Iron Age our archaeological knowledge is partial and skewed.

Admittedly, the identification of the “mute” archaeological record of the early Iron Age with Edom can never be fully confirmed without inscriptional finds from the sites themselves. However, this identification is still preferable to ostensibly “neutral” terms such as the “desert polity” or “Tel Masos Chiefdom” because it provides a *simpler* explanation for associated historical processes.⁴² According to Finkelstein’s most recent historical reconstruction—published as part of his criticism of my work—the Edomite Kingdom emerged in the late 9th century BCE, *precisely* at the time of its first mention as a political entity in a non-biblical source (in accordance with his ultra-positivist approach). This entails that either some previously unorganized “Edomites” replaced the existing population or took control over it, or, as Finkelstein suggests, a mixture of settled and nomadic populations on the Edomite Plateau, which included also those “who were previously engaged in copper production,”⁴³ established there a kingdom called “Edom” in an ultra-rapid process. These are both far more complex explanations than the possibility that the desert polity was already called Edom, even if one assumes a major change in its organization following the cessation of copper production in the late 9th century BCE.

In the context of the current discussion, Finkelstein’s reconstruction of a settled population on the Edomite Plateau in the late

⁴² Incidentally, it is noteworthy that within the broader discussion on the identification of archaeological records with biblical ethnic or political entities, the one discussed here is not less secure than the widely-accepted “Israelite” affiliation of the Iron I sites in the Hill Country, and is far more robust than the identification of the Iron I sites south of the Mujib with Moab, as suggested by Finkelstein and Lipschits (2011).

⁴³ Finkelstein 2020: 23.

9th/early 8th century BCE is illuminating, as it exposes the underlying assumption that a political entity that was strong enough to catch the attention of the Assyrians cannot be based on nomads. The accepted view for the history of occupation of the plateau is that sedentarization there started not before the late 8th century BCE, when the region was under Assyrian domination.⁴⁴ Going against this view, with evidence that is tenuous at best (Finkelstein's references to early occupation at Buseirah and Tawilan can be attributed to nomadic activities), reflects a specific and narrow perception of nomadism, and is yet another example of the architectural bias (in its broad sense, see above).

Biblical References and Circular Reasoning

Finkelstein asserts that my work is based on a literal and naïve reading of the Bible. He writes that “in order to justify the identification of the Arabah Iron I–IIA desert polity with early Edom, Ben-Yosef turns to the list of kings ‘who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites’ (Genesis 36:31–39). He [Ben-Yosef] sees this as ‘authentic materials on Edom before the days of David.’”⁴⁵ Finkelstein continues along this line, stating that “the description of David’s activity in Edom (2 Sam 8:14), is taken by Ben-Yosef as a genuine memory of affairs in the 10th century BCE.”⁴⁶ This is a distortion of the original context of these references, which I was using solely to demonstrate that the archaeological record can no longer be used to negate their historicity.⁴⁷ They, of course, can still be references to a later reality, but to support this one should bring other types of evidence from the varied tools of biblical criticism.

⁴⁴ This is based on evidence from well-studied sites such as Buseirah and Umm al-Biyara (*e.g.*, Bienkowski 1990).

⁴⁵ Finkelstein 2020: 15.

⁴⁶ Finkelstein 2020: 24.

⁴⁷ *E.g.*, Ben-Yosef 2016; 2019; Ben-Yosef *et al.* 2017. The fact of the matter is that in all of my publications on the archaeology of the south, I deliberately *avoid* treating textual issues, as I find archaeology’s potential for any significant contribution to be extremely limited, especially for the periods under discussion here.

For example, to support his claim that Genesis 36 depicts “realities [that are] not earlier than the late 6th or 5th centuries BCE” Finkelstein cites Knauf,⁴⁸ Nash⁴⁹ and Lemaire,⁵⁰ but all of these studies are principally based on the available archaeological data at the time. Knauf summarizes his study:⁵¹

*The ‘Edomite King List’ ... derives most probably from the end of the 6th or the beginning of the 5th century B.C. [...] This is to be concluded from **the history of settlement** in Southern Jordan... (emphasis is mine).*

Nash states that:⁵²

*The present study suggests that the chapter [Genesis 36] reached its unique shape as the result of a specifically Judahite discursive project. [...] New interpretations of **archaeological evidence** from southern Jordan and the Negev reveal [this] context... (emphasis is mine).*

And finally, Lemaire, who suggests that Genesis 36 reflects a late reality related to the Aramaeans:⁵³

[L]’interprétation de cette liste [Genesis 36] dans le cadre de la géographie et de l’histoire d’Édom reste obscure et problématique [Citing here Bartlett 1989’s treatment of the chapter, which is also at least partially based on the archaeology of southern Jordan]. À la lumière de notre rappel de la confusion textuelle classique ‘Édom/Aram’ et de la naissance probable de la royauté édomite vers 846–841, on se demandera tout naturellement si cette liste originale...

⁴⁸ Knauf 1985.

⁴⁹ Nash 2018.

⁵⁰ Lemaire 2001.

⁵¹ Knauf 1985: 253.

⁵² Nash 2018: 111.

⁵³ Lemaire 2001: 115–116.

In the current state of affairs, the muddled interface between archaeology and biblical scholarship can be easily exploited to promote any agenda one might have regarding the historicity of the text.⁵⁴ Accordingly, the only way forward is to deepen our understanding of the limitations of archaeology's application to historical issues; this can be done by bringing to the front epistemological discussions on archaeology-derived historical knowledge, such as the one presented here regarding biblical-era nomads.

The Khirbat en-Nahas Fortress

Finkelstein cast doubt on the 10th century dating of the Khirbat en-Nahas fortress already 15 years ago,⁵⁵ right after its first publication as part of the *preliminary* report on the early stage of excavations there by Thomas Levy and Mohammad Najjar.⁵⁶ More evidence in support of this dating that has accumulated since⁵⁷ did not change his conviction that the fortress was built as part of the Assyrian domination of the region during the late Iron Age (late 8th century BCE or later).⁵⁸ However, while Finkelstein's insistence might give the impression that the dating of the excavators is problematic—and possibly even affected by a desire to aggrandize evidence for 10th century social complexity—the fact of the matter is that the archaeological evidence for this dating, as presented in the final report,⁵⁹ is unequivocal. It is based on radiocarbon dating, pottery reading (indicating construction in the late Iron I) and typology of metallurgical remains. And while detailing the report's data is beyond the scope of the present paper, it is worth presenting here one observa-

⁵⁴ For example, based on the same archaeological record, Finkelstein (2020: 24) “see[s] no biblical references to a historic, pre 8th century BCE Edom,” while Na’aman considers the references in the Book of Kings (that put Edom in the Arabah, see 1 Kings 9:26) to contain genuine memories from the 10th and 9th centuries BCE.

⁵⁵ Finkelstein 2005.

⁵⁶ Levy *et al.* 2004.

⁵⁷ Levy *et al.* 2014a; 2018.

⁵⁸ Finkelstein 2020: 16.

⁵⁹ Levy *et al.* 2014a, in particular chapters 2, 4, and 13.

tion that clarifies the stratigraphy of the fortress's gatehouse, which is the basis for the early dating of the structure.

The *latest* stratigraphic phase that represents activities in the gatehouse is a thick accumulation of ash and other industrial debris, the remains of a metallurgical workshop that was established in this location after the fortress had been decommissioned. This layer (Layer A2), which is associated with substantial structural changes including a complete blockage of the passage into the fortress's courtyard, clearly covers the benches of the original phase (**Fig. 1**). Ten radiocarbon dates are available from this layer; the earliest samples (OxA-18977, GrA-25316) present calibrated, unmodelled 2-sigma ranges that fall exclusively within the 10th century, and the rest span the 9th century. Two dates from the final destruction/collapse phase (Layer A1) are also from this century.⁶⁰ This observation indicates that the fortress must have been constructed in the 10th century BCE (or earlier). Evidence related to metallurgical developments at the site, coupled with other considerations related to changes in the organization of production in the entire region, suggests that the decommissioning of the fortress and the establishment of the gatehouse's metallurgical workshop happened as a consequence of the Egyptian intervention in the days of Shoshenq I;⁶¹ accordingly, the original construction date of the fortress has to be earlier than this event.

Parenthetically, it should be noted that some of Finkelstein's considerations for a late date are shaky at best. Using an aerial photo to conclude that the fortress is late because "it was built on top of the site, cutting into the piles of copper industry waste."⁶² and the notion that while copper production was active it was "illogical to construct a fortress [...] in the midst of toxic fumes"⁶³ cannot be considered sound arguments. The site's extensive area (> 10ha.) witnessed major changes in the spatial organization of varied types of activities throughout the several hundred years of

⁶⁰ Levy *et al.* 2014a: 116. For the raw data see Appendix 2 in the digital supplementary materials.

⁶¹ See in particular and most recently Ben-Yosef *et al.* 2019.

⁶² Finkelstein 2005: 123.

⁶³ Finkelstein 2020: 16.



Fig. 1.

The gatehouse of the Khirbat en-Nahas fortress at the end on the 2006 excavations (Levy *et al.* 2014a: Figure 2.31; photo courtesy of T. E. Levy). “Benches” from the original construction phase are visible on both sides of the central passageway. They are clearly covered by a thick accumulation of ash (arrow), the remains of a secondary use of the structure as a metallurgical workshop in the late 10th and 9th centuries BCE.

the site’s function as a copper production hub. The hilly surroundings made leveling an area at the site’s entrance the easy solution for the construction of a fortress, which might have been used mostly during times of stress. In such times, the open courtyard could have been used as a temporary, protected gathering place for the important families and individuals of the site *as well as* those of the other tent dwellers of the region (similar to the function of the contemporaneous walled smelting camp of “Slaves’ Hill” in Timna).⁶⁴ In fact, except for a vast, open courtyard (73 × 73 m) surrounded by a solid wall with a single gate, the fortress lacks any structures, fitting well a defensive project of nomads.

⁶⁴ Ben-Yosef *et al.* 2017.

Lastly, the remote location of Khirbat en-Nahas, far from any important routes or strategic spots,⁶⁵ makes it hard to explain the construction of a fortress there in a period when copper was not produced in the region.

Tel Masos

While there can be little doubt that the history of Tel Masos is indeed related to that of the contemporaneous copper industry of the Arabah,⁶⁶ the archaeological evidence indicates that it was part of a different political entity.⁶⁷ An important observation in support of this is that in Tel Masos, the characteristic pottery of the Arabah and the Negev Highlands sites—the handmade, coarse “Negebite ware”—is absent.⁶⁸ However, even more telling is the disparate quality of the archaeological record of Tel Masos, which essentially represents a settled society. The site’s most prominent features—exceptionally rich archaeological remains, large stone-built structures, and even the metallurgical workshop that Finkelstein brings up in order to show connections to the Arabah copper producers⁶⁹—are all related to the fact that Tel Masos was a permanent settlement, occupied continuously for several generations. As Finkelstein suggests, the site was probably the place of a “gateway community”⁷⁰—its geographic location indeed supports this interpretation—but it was the frontier of the (*north*)*west* rather than that of the south. There is no reason to assume that the settled people of Tel Masos—with their connections and cultural affiliations to the north and

⁶⁵ The main trade route connecting Buseirah and Hazevah went through Naqeb Dahal, north of the Wadi Faynan area. For a detailed discussion on the regional road network see Ben-Yosef *et al.* 2014.

⁶⁶ Finkelstein 2020; 2014; Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006.

⁶⁷ See details in Ben-Yosef 2019; forthcoming.

⁶⁸ This point was first highlighted by Ben-Dor Evian (2017).

⁶⁹ The metallurgical evidence at the site represents a bronze smithy (Bachmann 1983: 201), and is not related to smelting (Finkelstein 2020: 17, citing the erroneous description of Kempinski *et al.* 1983: 21). Similar smithies are known from the same period in many sites from the settled areas, including Philistia (see most recently Workman *et al.* 2020).

⁷⁰ Finkelstein 2020: 23.

west—were part of the same society that engaged in copper production, let alone that they were the ones who controlled it.

Similar to the downdating of the Khirbat en-Nahas fortress discussed above, Finkelstein's suggestion to see in Tel Masos "the seat of the tribal leadership" of the desert polity (which he compares to the modern Rawala Bedouins)⁷¹ can be best understood in light of the *architectural bias*, that is, the overemphasis on building monumentality and other aspects of the settled in the identification of social complexity and geopolitical power.

CONCLUSIONS: A NEW PERSPECTIVE

In the 1980s and 1990s, Finkelstein pioneered archaeological research on Southern Levantine Bronze and Iron Age nomads, and was among those who emphasized the central role of nomadic societies in certain key historical processes, such as the emergence of ancient Israel in the Hill Country. At the same time, he was the one to (correctly) argue that nomads can be entirely archaeologically-invisible.⁷²

In excavations and surveys alike, negative evidence is sometimes as important as positive testimony. That may be a very frustrating fact for an archaeologist who spends weeks in the sun and dust of the desert; important as his finds may be, one can never know how much of the ancient population of a given area is not traceable.

According to Finkelstein, nomadic societies—like the one he reconstructs in the Late Bronze Age Hill Country—could have existed without leaving any detectable material remains, and even when some "nomadic sites" are found, they probably represent only a fragment of a polymorphous society whose true size cannot be estimated archaeologically. In light of this view, the conclusiveness of his historical reconstruction for the south is confounding, especially given that he does recognize the centrality of nomads to the historical processes in this region.

⁷¹ Finkelstein 2020: 19.

⁷² Finkelstein 1992a: 87.

While I still maintain that the historical reconstruction presented in my recent publications⁷³ fits better the available evidence, it should be noted that the differing views of specific aspects of the early Iron Age archaeology of the south—including its identification with Edom—have little bearing on my main argument, which is methodological in essence. It is related to the interpretation of Finkelstein’s “invisible nomads,” challenging the prevailing way in which historical knowledge is constructed regarding mobile societies. Recent research in the Arabah copper production centers, which revealed by chance a powerful nomadic polity, has demonstrated that “the comfortable library” (as Finkelstein puts it)⁷⁴ is not enough to fill the gap in our knowledge of nomadic social and political organization, and that generalizations and extrapolations might result in missing exceptional cases.

The mere possibility that other highly complex nomadic entities existed during these periods, only without leaving any remains that can attest to their high level of social and political organization, has far-reaching implications to core issues in biblical archaeology, as it challenges reconstructions based on the prevailing perception of nomads as weak and historically-marginal (a problem encapsulated in the term *architectural bias*). For example, the possibility that a nomadic population (or a mixed, sedentarized and nomadic population, along Finkelstein’s “continuum”)⁷⁵ created a strong polity in Judah during the early Iron Age, undermines the notion of the regional superiority of the more settled—and thus archaeologically more pronounced—(northern) Israel, an interpretation that has been ardently promoted by Finkelstein in recent publications.⁷⁶ In the same way, there is also no need for a Nimshide domination of (the still nomadic) Edom in order to explain social processes there.⁷⁷

⁷³ Ben-Yosef 2019; 2021; forthcoming.

⁷⁴ Finkelstein 1992a: 88.

⁷⁵ Finkelstein 1992a: 87.

⁷⁶ *E.g.*, Finkelstein 2019.

⁷⁷ Finkelstein 2020: 22.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Romina Della Casa, *Antiguo Oriente*'s Editor-in-Chief, for the opportunity to engage in this discussion and further clarify my views on the Iron Age archaeology of the south and the issue of nomads in biblical archaeology. I thank Ian W.N. Jones, Thomas E. Levy, Mohammad Najjar and the Central Timna Valley Project's staff for useful discussions and illuminating comments. I also thank two anonymous reviewers for their excellent comments that helped improving this manuscript. The work on this paper was partially supported by the Israel Science Foundation grant #1880/17.

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NEW RADIOCARBON DATES FROM THE EDMITE HIGHLANDS AND THE HYDRAULIC SYSTEMS OF SOUTHERN JORDAN

JUAN MANUEL TEBES
Juan_Tebes@uca.edu.ar
Universidad Católica Argentina
CONICET
Buenos Aires - Argentina

Summary: New Radiocarbon Dates from the Edomite Highlands and the Hydraulic Systems of Southern Jordan

This study aims to interpret the recent radiocarbon datings of lime-based mortars from hydraulic structures of the archaeological site of as-Sila, in the northern Edomite plateau (Jordan). These radiocarbon dates suggest three main chronological horizons throughout a long period of time, but their interpretation is a difficult task. They present problems related to the nature of the mortar formation and to the discrepancies with the chronology provided by the local pottery, the 14C datings, and the archaeological evidence of other sites in the region. A cautious, interdisciplinary methodology is thus necessary, one in which the 14C datings are complemented by the contextual archaeological data. Following this approach, we suggest the hydraulic system of as-Sila would have been built during the Iron Age II and later reused during the Persian-Hellenistic and Early-Middle Islamic periods.

Keywords: Radiocarbon dating – Mortar – Water management – Southern Jordan – Edom

Resumen: Nuevas dataciones por radiocarbono de la altiplanicie edomita y los sistemas hidráulicos de Jordania meridional

El presente estudio tiene por objeto interpretar las recientes dataciones de radiocarbono de morteros a base de cal de las estructuras hidráulicas del sitio arqueológico de as-Sila, en la meseta norte edomita (Jordania). Estas dataciones de radiocarbono sugieren tres horizontes cronológicos principales en un largo período de tiempo, pero su interpretación es una tarea difícil. Éstas presentan problemas relacionados con la

Article received: April 6, 2021; approved: May 1, 2021.

naturaleza de la formación del mortero y con las discrepancias con la cronología proporcionada por la cerámica local, las dataciones de C14, y los datos arqueológicos de otros sitios de la región. Por lo tanto, es necesaria una metodología prudente e interdisciplinaria, en la que las dataciones de C14 se complementen con los datos arqueológicos contextuales. Basándonos en esta aproximación, sugerimos que el sistema hidráulico de as-Sila se habría construido durante la Edad del Hierro II y habría sido reutilizado posteriormente durante los períodos persa-helenístico y el período islámico temprano y medio.

Palabras clave: Datación de radiocarbono – Mortero – Gestión del agua – Jordania meridional – Edom

Archaeology of the Edomite Plateau and Excavations at as-Sila

The Edomite Plateau, located in the south-western part of Jordan, possesses a long history of human settlement that harks back to the Neolithic period. Although traditionally considered a peripheral region, far from the urban centers of the Levant and devoid of large agricultural resources, during certain periods the region experienced periods of settlement flourishing, particularly during the Iron Age, Nabataean-Roman, Byzantine and Midde-Islamic periods.¹ The region is known as the place where the Iron Age polity of Edom, mentioned by the Hebrew Bible and contemporary Mesopotamian sources, emerged and flourished.² Until recently, only three archaeological sites dating to the Iron Age had been properly excavated and published—Buseirah, Tawilan and Umm al-Biyara, which were dated according to their material remains (mostly pottery) and a few epigraphic texts.³ Limited excavations have been recently carried out in the sites of Khirbat al-Malayqtah, Khirbat al-Kur, Khirbat al-Iraq Shmaliya, and Tawilan, which provided the first radiocarbon dates for Iron Age sites of the Edomite Plateau.⁴

¹ MacDonald 2015.

² See Bartlett 1989; Tebes 2013: 121–125.

³ Bennett and Bienkowski 1995; Bienkowski 2002; 2011.

⁴ Smith, Najjar and Levy 2014.



Fig. 1.

Map with the location of as-Sila and the main sites mentioned in the article (J. M. Tebes).

Since 2015 the site of as-Sila, a large 43 ha site located in the northern part of the Edomite Plateau (**Fig. 1**), has been being investigated by an interdisciplinary research group of the University of Barcelona led by R. Da Riva. According to the pottery found by this and previous investigations of the site, as-Sila presents evidence of occupation during the Iron Age, Nabataean-Roman, Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman periods (**Figs. 2–3**).⁵ The most notable archaeological feature is a large water system with more than a hundred structures comprising channels, tanks, and cisterns carved into the sandstone or

⁵ Da Riva 2019; Da Riva *et al.* 2017; forthcoming.

cut into boulders, of an extent so far unparalleled on the Edomite Plateau (**Figs. 4–6**).⁶ During 2015 and 2016 the Barcelona team surveyed and mapped all the site's hydraulic structures. Sixteen samples of lime-based mortars were collected from these structures and subject to petrographic and mineralogical analyses; 12 AMS radiocarbon dates were taken from them (**Table 1; Fig. 7**). The petrographic and mineralogical analyses were carried out by M. Soto, while the radiocarbon studies were done by F. J. Santos Arévalo.⁷

This is the first time that 14C dates are available from a mountain-top site on the Edomite plateau and the first 14C dating of hydraulic structures in this region. Although these dates are of enormous importance for unravelling the history of human settlement on the Edomite Plateau, their interpretation poses several methodological problems.



Fig. 2.

Panoramic view of as-Sila (photo: Sela Archaeological Project).

⁶ Marsal 2020: 75–81.

⁷ See Da Riva *et al.* 2021, for the details of these analyses.



Fig. 3.
Panoramic view of as-Sila (photo: Sela Archaeological Project).



Fig. 4.
As-Sila: water deposit 36 (photo: Sela Archaeological Project).



Fig. 5.

As-Sila: water channel 29 (photo: Sela Archaeological Project).



Fig. 6

As-Sila: water deposit 27 (photo: Sela Archaeological Project).

CNA#	User Code	Age BP	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$	Calibrated ranges
4192.1.1	SL16.D16.2	3150 \pm 30	-11.5	1498–1382 BC (90.0%) 1340–1310 BC (10.0%)
4191.1.1	SL16.D38.9	2980 \pm 30	-8.7	1371–1359 BC (1.2%) 1297–1113 BC (98.8%)
4393.1.1	SL16.D03.5	2890 \pm 30	-4.6	1192–1170 BC (3.3%) 1165–1144 BC (3.3%) 1131–977 BC (93.4%)
4193.1.1	SL16.107.13	2660 \pm 30	-12.2	895–868 BC (8.7%) 857–854 BC (0.6%) 850–794 BC (90.7%)
4394.1.1	SL16.D57.10	2650 \pm 30	-9.6	894–870 BC (6.3%) 849–792 BC (93.7%)
4392.1.1	SL16.D22.8	2500 \pm 30	-13.0	787–699 BC (27.9%) 696–540 BC (72.1%)
4396.1.1	SL16.D91.6	2300 \pm 30	-6.5	404–356 BC (82.1%) 286–235 BC (17.9%)
4395.1.1	SL16.D59.11	1260 \pm 25	-8.1	670–778 AD (92.9%) 791–805 AD (2.1%) 812–826 AD (1.7%) 840–862 AD (3.3%)
4391.1.1	SL16.H1.UM3.2	1000 \pm 30	-18.1	983–1049 AD (82.2%) 1086–1124 AD (14.5%) 1137–1150 AD (3.3%)
4189.1.1	SL16.H1.UM3.1	980 \pm 30	-21.1	993–1055 AD (51.0%) 1077–1153 AD (49.0%)
4190.1.1	SL16.H1.6.169	970 \pm 30	-21.7	1018–1059 AD (36.3%) 1065–1154 AD (63.7%)
4397.1.1	SL16.D13.1	910 \pm 25	-12.7	1035–1189 AD (99.1%) 1199–1202 AD (0.9%)

Table 1.

Radiocarbon dates from mortars from as-Sila (CALIB3.0; IntCal13)
(F. J. Santos Arévalo).

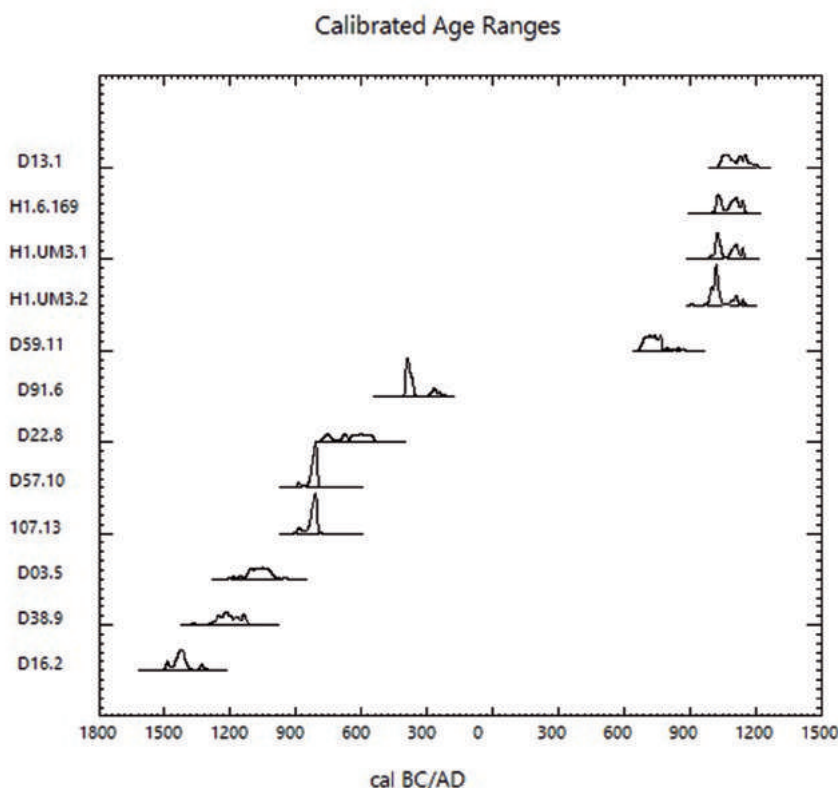


Fig. 7.
Calibrated age ranges of the as-Sila Radiocarbon Dates
(F. J. Santos Arévalo).

The as-Sila Radiocarbon Dates: Problems and Interpretation

Since the 1960s, scholars have used radiocarbon dating to determine the date of lime-based plaster and mortar and the date of construction or renovations of buildings and structures. The age of ancient structures from Europe, the Middle East and the Americas have been determined with this method.⁸ This type of radiocarbon dating involves the study of the carbon from the atmosphere that is fixed to the mortar during the

⁸ See Al-Bashaireh 2008: 106–114; Urbanova, Boaretto and Artioli 2020.

hardening process, which can theoretically point to the mortar's period of creation. As observed in a recent reassessment of this method:

This dating method assumes that after the emplacement of the lime binder the carbonation process occurs rapidly (i.e. weeks or months) with respect to the architectural history of the building. Therefore, the measurement of the ^{14}C content of the binder should yield the age of the corresponding construction phase.⁹

The interpretation of the ^{14}C dates of the mortars from the as-Sila hydraulic systems poses several problems. These can be grouped into two types: a) problems related to the process by which the mortars are formed; and b) problems regarding the relationship between the ^{14}C datings and the site's overall archaeological evidence.

Problems of the first kind arise from the same process of mortar formation. Several issues can cause incorrect radiocarbon readings, including: the hardening process can take a long time to finish (years or decades), altering the relationship with the original date of the mortar formation; interaction with water may alter the deposits of carbonate and thus alter the age of the mortar; contamination with limestone, under-burned calcareous raw material or any other form of old calcareous inclusions would produce incorrect older ages; and the presence of aggregates containing inorganic carbon can interfere in the dating.¹⁰

On a more general level, the ^{14}C datings from mortar are also subject to issues related to the presence of fluctuations in the radiocarbon calibration curve. Particularly significant for the Iron II is the flat calibrated radiocarbon curve from 800–400 BCE (“Hallstatt plateau”); although high resolution dendrochronological measurements have greatly improved calibration for this period,¹¹ extreme caution should still be taken on dates falling within this period.¹²

⁹ Urbanova, Boaretto and Artioli 2020: 505.

¹⁰ Al-Bashireh 2012: 11–12; Urbanova, Boaretto and Artioli 2020: 505–506; Da Riva *et al.* 2021: 58.

¹¹ Fahrni *et al.* 2020.

¹² For an overview of the problems associated with dendrochronology, see Porter 2015.

The second type of problems involve the relationship between the resultant mortar 14C datings and the chronology based on the archaeological evidence, particularly when there exist wide discrepancies (that is to say, beyond the margin of error) between both. This is precisely what happens with the as-Sila datings.

The mortar 14C dates from as-Sila are distributed through a long-time range—even though some trends can be discerned. Taking into account the widest calibration ranges, three main chronological horizons can be discerned:

- Mid-late 2nd mill. BCE: Late Bronze, with two 14th–12th cent. BCE dates (CNA# 4192.1.1, 4191.1.1); and Iron Age I, with one 12th–10th century BCE date (CNA# 4393.1.1);
- 1st mill. BCE: Iron Age II, with three 9th–6th cent. BCE dates (CNA# 4193.1.1, 4394.1.1, 4392.1.1); and Persian-Hellenistic, with one 4th cent. BCE date (probably extending into the 3rd cent. BCE) (CNA# 4396.1.1);
- Mid-1st–early 2nd mill. AD: Early Islamic, with one 7th–8th cent. AD date (CNA# 4395.1.1); and Middle Islamic, with four 10th–12th cent. AD dates (CNA# 4391.1.1, 4189.1.1, 4190.1.1, 4397.1.1.)

The question is if these three chronological groups correspond with the actual dates of construction and potential reuse of the hydraulic system. To begin with, interpretations should be taken as tentative, since the mortar samples used for 14C dating comprise only a limited corpus of more than a hundred structures comprising the hydraulic system of as-Sila.

The use of lime plaster cannot be used for purposes of chronology, because the technology of lime plaster is one of the oldest building techniques, appearing in the southern Levant as early as the Neolithic period.¹³ In the southern Levant, the earliest plastered cisterns are known from the Middle Bronze Age, although the use of plaster in cisterns only became widespread in the Iron Age II.¹⁴ In the regional

¹³ Rollefson 1990; Iriarte *et al.* 2016.

¹⁴ Faust 2006: 2231.

context, lime plaster has been documented as a waterproof application at Ramesside Timna (southern Arabah) for lining stone basins,¹⁵ at the 'Ain el Qudeirat Valley (north-eastern Sinai) for coating a Middle Bronze II or Late Bronze aqueduct,¹⁶ and for lining water reservoirs in Petra and Udhruh in southern Jordan and at Negev sites during the Nabataean, Roman and Byzantine periods.¹⁷

The relationship between the ¹⁴C dates and what is known about the history of settlement of the Edomite Plateau is more complicated, particularly with respect to the pre-8th cent. BCE dates. According to the most recent research, there is no archaeological evidence of human settled occupation in this region during the 2nd mill. BCE (Middle-Late Bronze periods). At most, the area was inhabited by nomadic pastoral groups, based on the references of New Kingdom Egyptian texts to the *shasu*-groups of Edom (although these may very well be references to their living in the Negev or Sinai).¹⁸ The modern chronology of Iron Age Edom was established by C.-M. Bennett, who following her excavations at the Edomite sites of Umm al-Biyara, Tawilan and Buseirah during the early 1960s-early 1980s, established that the beginning of settled life occurred in the later phases of the Iron II (7th-early 6th cent. BCE). This view hinged upon the dating of the local decorated pottery and chronological synchronisms with Neo-Assyrian history. This overall dating was slightly modified by Bienkowski in the final publications of these sites, extending the range to encompass the whole of the Persian period.¹⁹ During the 1990s, Finkelstein suggested the presence of Iron I occupation based on his identification of pithoi and cooking pots with parallels in Iron I assemblages from Israel and central Jordan, and the findings of Midianite/Qurayyah pottery in sites of the Edomite Plateau.²⁰ This

¹⁵ Avner 2014: 119–120.

¹⁶ Bruins and van der Plicht 2007: 489.

¹⁷ Shaer 1997; Al-Aseer 2000; Akasheh *et al.* 2004; Meir, Freidin, and Gilead 2005: fig. 5; Al-Bashaireh 2012; Bonazza *et al.* 2013; Driessen and Abudanah 2018; Ore, Bruins, and Meir 2020: 4.

¹⁸ MacDonald 2015: 22.

¹⁹ Bennett and Bienkowski 1995; Bienkowski 2002; 2011.

²⁰ Finkelstein 1992; 1995: 127–137.

interpretation was contested by Bienkowski, who argued that all excavations at the Edomite sites reached bedrock and therefore all “Iron I” sherds should be dated to the Iron II, while the parallels with Cisjordanian pottery were regarded as irrelevant to the archaeology of Edom.²¹

During the 2000s most scholarly attention was redirected to the several archaeological projects taking place in the Faynan region of southern Jordan. As a ramification of its research at Faynan, in 2006–2007 a team of the University of California San Diego surveyed and carried out soundings at four Iron Age sites of the Edomite Plateau.²² At three of these sites, Kh. Al-Malayqtha, Kh. Al-Kur and Tawilan, the first 14C dates from the Iron Age of the Edomite Plateau were taken (**Table 2**). Most of these dates fall in the 8th–6th cent. BCE, with the exception of Tawilan, that extends mostly in the 9th cent. BCE.

Site Name	Sample #	Material	Age BP	Calibrated ranges
Kh. Al-Malayqtha	OxA-18322	seeds	2572±30	810–578 BC (95.4%)
Kh. Al-Malayqtha	OxA-18323	seeds	2589±30	820–612 BC (95.4%)
Kh. Al-Malayqtha	OxA-18344	seeds	2491±27	776–511 BC (95.4%)
Kh. Al-Kur	OxA-18345	seeds	2539±30	799–545 BC (95.4%)
Tawilan	OxA-18346	seeds	2642±28	890–785 BC (95.4%)

Table 2.

Recent Iron Age radiocarbon dates from the Edomite highlands (OxCal 4.05; IntCal04). Adapted from Smith, Najjar and Levy 2014: Table 3.2.

It is clear that the first chronological horizon (mid-late 2nd mill. BCE) of the 14C dates from as-Sila falls completely outside the range of these Edomite Plateau 14C dates. Regarding the pottery evidence, a short report made by Zayadine of the sherds Lindner collected at the site briefly describes the presence of pottery “from the Early Bronze I (3rd

²¹ Bienkowski 1992.

²² Smith, Najjar and Levy 2014.

millennium BC) until the Mamluk period (14th/15th centuries AD),” noting the finding of a sherd from the Late Bronze Age.²³ However, other surveys in the site did not report any pre-Iron Age pottery. Although the existence of nomadic groups living in the as-Sila area cannot be discounted during the mid-late 2nd mill. BCE, it is unlikely that these groups left any archaeological evidence of their presence. Most importantly, such technology of water management can be better associated with sedentary communities whose economies were based on agriculture, such as the ones that inhabited as-Sila since the Iron Age.

It is in the second radiocarbon horizon (1st mill. BCE), and particularly the three Iron II dates, where we find a perfect correspondence with the archaeological data. The three Iron II 14C dates are supported by finds of so-called “Edomite” pottery, also known as “Southern Transjordan-Negev Pottery” (STNP) or “Busayra Painted Ware,” in Edomite highlands sites and the northern Negev between the late 8th and the early 6th cent. BCE.²⁴ This characteristic pottery was found in as-Sila by Glueck’s survey of Eastern Palestine (“EI I–II sherds”), Hart’s Edom Survey, Lindner’s survey, and MacDonald’s Tafila-Busayra Survey²⁵ and again by the present project.²⁶ Finkelstein identified a few Iron I sherds from Hart’s survey of the site,²⁷ although as we have seen his interpretation has been contested. The only Persian-Hellenistic date is supported by the Hellenistic pottery reported by Zayadine’s report.²⁸

The use of 14C dates for delineating the chronology of Iron Age southern Jordan is not without problems, particularly the presence of fluctuations in the radiocarbon calibration curve.²⁹ Thus, some scholars have attempted to build a chronology of Edom completely independent

²³ Lindner 1997: 282; Lindner, Hübner and Gunsam 2001: 269–270.

²⁴ Tebes 2011; 2013: 71–109; Singer-Avitz 2014.

²⁵ Glueck 1939: 32; Hart 1989: 110–111; Lindner 1997: 282; Lindner, Hübner and Gunsam 2001: 269–270; MacDonald *et al.* 2004: 276–277.

²⁶ Da Riva *et al.* 2017: 632; Da Riva 2019: 163.

²⁷ Finkelstein 1992: 161; 1995: 129.

²⁸ Lindner 1997: 283; Lindner, Hübner and Gunsam 2001: 270.

²⁹ Smith, Najjar and Levy 2014: 287; Tebes 2021: 6–7.

from the radiocarbon dating, based only on epigraphic sources and pottery finds, reaching later dates for the climax of the Edomite polity.³⁰

One of the most surprising aspects of the mortar 14C from as-Sila is that there are no 14C dates from the Nabataean-Roman period. There is one 14C date from a grave pointing to occupation during the 1st cent. AD,³¹ but it is not related to the hydraulic system. This contrasts with the wide evidence of Nabataean pottery found at the site³² and the well-known works of water management made by the Nabataeans in the Petra area and elsewhere (see below).

The third radiocarbon horizon (mid-1st–early 2nd mill. AD) is clearly supported by the Medieval pottery found at as-Sila,³³ although 14C readings from timber coming from a house gave three later dates, ranging between the 15th and the 17th cent. AD.³⁴

In order to test the problems and the efficiency of the 14C datings of mortar from as-Sila, we will briefly discuss recent 14C and OSL datings of mortar in southern Jordan. These studies have involved the 14C and OSL datings of mortar and plaster from archaeological assemblages at Petra and Uhruh, in some cases from samples coming from hydraulic systems, such as Petra's Great Temple bath complex, High Place of Sacrifice water cistern, and as-Siq canal; and two of Udhruh's *qanat* reservoirs³⁵ (**Table 3**).

³⁰ van der Veen 2020: 106–115.

³¹ Da Riva *et al.* forthcoming.

³² Glueck 1939: 32; Lindner 1997: 283; Lindner, Hübner and Gunsam 2001: 270; MacDonald *et al.* 2004: 276–277.

³³ Da Riva 2019: 163.

³⁴ Da Riva *et al.* forthcoming.

³⁵ Al-Bashaireh 2008; 2012; 2013; Al-Bashaireh and Hodgins 2011; 2014; Driessen and Abudanah 2018.

Site Name	Dating Type	Material	Periods indicated by 14C-OSL	Bibliography
Petra – Main Theater	14C	charcoal inclusions	Nabataean	Al-Bashaireh and Hodgins 2011
Petra – Qasr el-Bint	14C	wood inclusions	Nabataean	Al-Bashaireh and Hodgins 2011; 2014
Petra – Temple of the Winged Lions	14C	charcoal inclusions	Nabataean	Al-Bashaireh and Hodgins 2011
Petra – Great Temple	14C	plaster & mortar	Nabataean, Roman	Al-Bashaireh 2012
Petra – bath complex at Great Temple	14C	mortar	Byzantine	Al-Bashaireh 2012
Petra – Florentinus Tomb	14C	plaster & straw inclusions	Nabataean	Al-Bashaireh and Hodgins 2011; Al-Bashaireh 2013
Petra – al-Siq canal	14C	charcoal inclusions	Nabataean, Roman	Al-Bashaireh and Hodgins 2011
Petra – Painted Room	14C	plaster & straw inclusions	Nabataean	Al-Bashaireh 2013
Petra – cistern at High Place of Sacrifice	14C	plaster	Nabataean	Al-Bashaireh 2012; 2013
Petra – Petra Church	14C	plaster	Byzantine	Al-Bashaireh 2013
Petra – Petra Pool Complex	14C	plaster & charcoal inclusions	Nabataean, Roman	Al-Bashaireh 2013
Udhruh – Ottoman Castle	14C	plaster & charcoal, seed inclusions	Ayyubid-Mamluk, Ottoman	Al-Bashaireh 2013
Udhruh – Tower 1	14C	plaster & fibres inclusions	Early Frank-Ayyubid	Al-Bashaireh 2013
Udhruh – North qanat reservoir in Wadi el-Fiqay	OSL	mortar	Nabataean, Roman	Driessen and Abudanah 2018
Udhruh – South qanat reservoir in Wadi el-Fiqay	OSL & 14C	mortar & charred twigs	Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad	Driessen and Abudanah 2018

Table 3.

Radiocarbon and OSL datings of mortar and plaster and other organic inclusions within them in southern Jordan.

The methodology followed by Al-Bashaireh and Hodgins in their 14C datings of Petra and Udhruh is important, as they radiocarbon dated both the lime binders and organic inclusions found within them, such as wood, charcoal, straw and fibres. There was an almost complete agreement between the 14C dates of the mortar and the organic inclusions.³⁶ In other words, these organic inclusions, and in some cases inscriptions found in the same structures, served for checking the accuracy of the 14C datings of mortar.

Following the success of these analyses, we can take a cautious, but proactive approach to the interpretation of the evidence. By using an interdisciplinary methodology, we can assess the data coming from the 14C datings on mortar by complementing them with information from the contextual archaeological data. This data comprises:

- The pottery assemblage collected at the site.
- The inscriptions found in or close to the site.
- The architectural layout of the hydraulic system and similar works of water management.

With due caution, we suggest that the construction of at least part of the hydraulic structures of as-Sila dates to Iron Age II, thus agreeing with the large quantities of Iron II pottery sherds found in the site. The post-Iron II 14C dates would correspond to later adaptations and renovations of the water structure during the Persian-Hellenistic, Early and Middle Islamic periods. Earlier 14C dates should not be easily discarded, as they would correspond with recent evidence of water management in the Negev and north-western Arabia in the 2nd mill. BCE and earlier (see below). However, until new evidence is presented to the contrary, all contextual evidence points to the Iron II as the initial phase of construction of the hydraulic system of as-Sila.

No inscription was found directly associated with the water installations. There are some inscriptions inscribed in Arabic, some of them containing *wusūm* or tribal marks. The most significant inscription is the famous relief of Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus, which

³⁶ Al-Bashaireh 2012: 24.

was carved sometime between 553–543 BCE. However, the relationship between the relief and the hydraulic system is not straightforward, as the inscription is not easily accessible or visible from the site.³⁷ What is noteworthy is the absence of Nabataean or Roman-Byzantine inscriptions associated with the hydraulic system, as was customary in the water works built in Petra and the Negev.³⁸

We can now proceed to the third contextual archaeological data, the architectural layout of the hydraulic system and similar works of water management in the southern Levant and north-western Arabia.

The as-Sila Hydraulic System and the Southern Levantine-Northern Arabian Water Management

The hydraulic system found at as-Sila is unique among the sites of the Edomite Plateau. Although rock-hewn hydraulic features are common in Nabataean sites in and around the Petra area, few have been found to the north. Sites on the Edomite plateau should be considered part of a larger geographical and historical area comprising the southern arid margins of the Levant and north-western Arabia. Dry farming was possible in certain ecological niches with limited precipitation levels, particularly the highlands of Edom³⁹ and the loessical valleys of the northern Negev,⁴⁰ or with access to underground water, especially the oasis towns of the northern Hejaz.⁴¹ Access to water was of primary significance for the mountain-top sites in the Edomite highlands such as as-Sila. Limited precipitation levels, with a 200–125 mm of average annual rainfall, but with high variability from one year to the other, implied that storage of water was essential for daily living and the limited agriculture production that is possible in this area. Several technologies were used throughout history to capture, transport and store

³⁷ Da Riva *et al.* 2017: 633; Da Riva 2019: 168–171.

³⁸ Bedal 2002; Ore, Bruins and Meir 2020: 2.

³⁹ Oleson 2018.

⁴⁰ Bruins 2012: 32–36.

⁴¹ Kürschner and Neef 2011: 30.

water, including rock-cut or built reservoirs and cisterns, terracing of agricultural fields, earth or masonry dams, open earth or stone water channels and aqueducts, terracotta pipes, and *qanats*.⁴²

The first chronological horizon (mid-late 2nd mill. BCE) represented in the as-Sila mortar 14C dates would fit into the evidence of the spread of new water management systems in the arid southern Levant and north-western Arabia in the late 2nd–early 1st mill. BCE, but does not find correspondence with the archaeological evidence found in the site and the region. During this period, the arid southern Levant and north-western Arabia experienced large socio-economic transformations—a true “revolution in the desert” that included the earliest evidence of Bedouin agriculture in the Negev desert and the construction of the earliest hydraulic works in the Hejaz.⁴³ There is some debate as when agriculture started to be practiced in these areas, and despite some scholarly hesitations,⁴⁴ there is wide evidence of runoff and floodwater farming in the central Negev and the Faynan lowlands of southern Jordan during the Iron Age, if not before. We have already cited the radiocarbon dating of an aqueduct mortar from the ‘Ain el Qudeirat Valley to the Middle Bronze II or Late Bronze Age. To this should be added analyses of phytoliths and sherulites taken from ancient agricultural terraced fields from Horvat Haluqim in the central Negev highlands that have been radiocarbon dated to the Late Bronze-Early Iron Ages.⁴⁵ The construction of cisterns in the central Negev Highlands has been traditionally dated to the Iron Age,⁴⁶ although the high spatial correlation between open cisterns and Early Bronze Age and Middle Bronze Age I sites would re-date the construction of at least some of them to the 3rd mill. BCE (see below).⁴⁷ The still visible field systems surveyed and excavated in the Wadi Faynan contained dense concentrations of Iron Age sherds within their walls and enclosures, reflecting their use as part of

⁴² See Oleson 2018.

⁴³ Tebes 2020.

⁴⁴ Gilboa *et al.* 2009: 91–92; Shahack-Gross and Finkelstein 2017.

⁴⁵ Bruins and van der Plicht 2007; 2017.

⁴⁶ Haiman 1994: 49–53; 2002; 2003.

⁴⁷ Ore, Bruins, and Meir 2020.

complex run-off farming regimes.⁴⁸ During the 2nd mill. BCE, complex irrigation systems were erected in north-western Arabian oasis-towns such as Qurayyah and Tayma, consisting of retaining walls to divert runoff or underground water to nearby farming fields.⁴⁹

As we have seen, the second radiocarbon horizon (1st mill. BCE) finds a reasonably good correspondence with the site's pottery assemblage and the 14C and pottery evidence from other sites on the Edomite Plateau. However, few similar rock-cut installations are known in the Edomite highlands during the Iron Age II. These include those surveyed at Ba'ja III and Umm el-Ala and probably Kutle II,⁵⁰ but they are comparatively smaller than the one found at as-Sila. Surprisingly, although rock-cut hydraulic features will become plentiful with the Nabataeans, particularly at Petra, but also Umm al-Biyara(?), Ghrareh, Humayma, Udhruh and Wadi Ramm,⁵¹ none of the mortar 14C dates from as-Sila point to use during the Nabataean period.

On a more transregional level, there is some archaeological evidence of water management at Iron Age Jordanian sites such as Hisban, Amman, Sahab, and Tell Es-Sa'idiyyeh (cisterns, reservoirs, wells, channels). In the Moabite Stela, the building of water pools is one of the deeds attributed to king Mesha.⁵²

There is, however, a closer if often overlooked, parallel for the as-Sila hydraulic system. This is provided by the water installations located close to the large number of settlements established in the central Negev Highlands during the Iron Age II, traditionally dated to the 10th or late 10th–early 9th cent. BCE. According to some scholars, these sites, numbering around 350 and variously identified as fortified posts, towers, farms and corrals, were founded by a central Cisjordanian entity (the Israelite or the Judaeen kingdoms);⁵³ while others consider

⁴⁸ Mattingly *et al.* 2007: 282–285.

⁴⁹ Hüneburg *et al.* 2019; Wellbrock *et al.* 2018; forthcoming.

⁵⁰ Lindner 1992: 144–145; Bagg 2006: 615–617.

⁵¹ Bedal 2002; Shqairat, Abudanh and Twaissi 2010; Mithen 2012: 111–114; Oleson 2018; Driessen and Abudanah 2018.

⁵² Wählin 1997; Bagg 2006: 617–623; Khaleq and Ahmed 2007: 85–86; Shqairat 2019: 46–47.

⁵³ Cohen and Cohen-Amin 2004.

them as part of a long-term process of sedentarization of the local nomads.⁵⁴ Haiman has dated two types of water cisterns to this period:

1. Rock-cut cisterns, of which a dozen were found in proximity to the sites.
2. Open reservoirs, 3–20 m in diameter and 2–5 m in dept dug into sealed earth, paved with stones and unplastered.

Over 100 open reservoirs were found. These cisterns were designed to collect the limited amount of rain water that this desert area could provide, both for drinking and for engaging in agriculture. The findings of sickle blades, silos and threshing floors confirm the presence of dry farming in this period.⁵⁵

Recently, Ore, Bruins and Meir carried out an in-depth spatial analysis of these cisterns, leading them to re-date some of these installations to the Bronze Age.⁵⁶ They concluded that the Negev cisterns comprise three main types:

1. Open cisterns dug and constructed in relatively soft clayey marl (Haiman's type 2). They present revetting walls built of limestone blocks, without plaster. Their spatial correlation with local sites suggests they were built in Early Bronze Age and Middle Bronze Age sites, and reused during the Iron Age.
2. Cisterns hewn in limestone (Haiman's type 1). They are subdivided into:
 - 2.1 Bell shaped cisterns, hewn mostly in hard limestone, with narrow, square openings (diameter: 1,1 m) and wide bottoms (5–6 m) (**Fig. 8**).
 - 2.2 Small bowl-shaped cisterns hewn into soft limestone, with circular circumferences of about 3,9 m and shallower depth (2 m). Found in the vicinity of Iron Age II, Roman, Byzantine and Early Islamic sites.

⁵⁴ Finkelstein 1995: 103–126.

⁵⁵ Haiman 1994: 49–53; 2002; 2003.

⁵⁶ Ore, Bruins, and Meir 2020.

3. Roofed rock cisterns hewn in soft chalk, are larger and plastered. They present Roman-Byzantine inscriptions on their walls.

A comparison with the water system of as-Sila shows some interesting results. First, Type 2 cisterns are similar to the square and circular cisterns cut on limestone found at as-Sila. While their date is not clear, they evidently do not seem to date earlier than the Iron Age. Since they are hewn into hard rocks, they required quarrying tools stronger than those currently available in the Bronze Age (flint, copper, bronze). Therefore, they were probably built with iron tools.⁵⁷ The size of the as-Sila cisterns, with diameters of opening between 0,60 x 0,40 m and 1,60 x 1,30 m,⁵⁸ is similar to the Type 2.1 cisterns. Second, Type 3 plastered cisterns usually present inscriptions that date them to the Roman-Byzantine period, which is not the case at as-Sila. Therefore I would tentatively suggest that the Negev Highlands cisterns provide a well-dated parallel to the water system found at as-Sila.

The Negev Highlands cisterns also look similar to the hydraulic installations at Umm al-Biyara. These installations, located on a mountain-top site overlooking Petra, pose similar problems to as-Sila. Eight rock-cut piriform cisterns associated with rock-cut rainwater channels were recorded here, but they cannot be conclusively associated with the nearby Iron II Edomite settlement nor with an adjacent Nabataean building (**Figs. 9–10**).⁵⁹ But if they do not date to the Iron II period, it is difficult to know how and where people obtained water in this isolated place.

For the third radiocarbon horizon (mid-1st–early 2nd mill. AD), there is ample archaeological evidence of the use of different technologies of water management in Jordan during the Early Islamic and particularly the Middle Islamic period, such as cisterns, aqueducts and *qanats*. Many of these features had been built in Roman and Byzantine times and were reused later, such as in the case of Udhruh, sites in the

⁵⁷ Ore, Bruins, and Meir 2020: 2.

⁵⁸ Marsal 2020: 77.

⁵⁹ Bienkowski 2011: 140.

southern Jordan Valley and Jerash in northern Jordan.⁶⁰ Therefore, the Medieval 14C dates of the as-Sila mortar can be understood within the context of general reuse of older hydraulic systems throughout the Early and Middle Islamic periods.



Fig. 8.

Bell-shaped cistern with narrow opening, central Negev Highlands
(photo: G. Ore).

⁶⁰ Driessen and Abudanah 2018: 146, 148; Al Karaimeh 2019; Kaptijn 2019; Boyer 2019; Lichtenberger and Raja 2020.



Fig. 9.
Rock-hewn cistern at Umm al-Biyara (photo: J. M. Tebes).



Fig. 10.
Rock-hewn cistern at Umm al-Biyara (photo: J. M. Tebes).

Conclusion

The study of the hydraulic system of as-Sila is of the utmost significance for understanding the history of human settlement on the Edomite Plateau. The 12 ¹⁴C datings taking from mortar indicate three main chronological horizons: mid-late 2nd mill. BCE, 1st mill. BCE, and mid-1st–early 2nd mill. AD. However, the ¹⁴C dating of the mortar presents several methodological problems, some related to the nature of the mortar formation and some associated with the discrepancies with the chronology provided by the local pottery and the ¹⁴C and archaeological evidence of other sites in the same region. Given these problems, we prefer to be extremely cautious in the interpretation of this data, taking an interdisciplinary methodology by which the ¹⁴C datings are complemented by the contextual archaeological data. We have followed the successful example of similar ¹⁴C datings of mortar carried out in southern Jordan, some of them coming from hydraulic systems, that have arrived at chronologies grossly matching the associated ¹⁴C datings of organic inclusions, archaeological and epigraphic evidence. With due caution, we can date the construction of at least part of the hydraulic system at as-Sila to the Iron Age II, with later adaptations and renovations in the Persian-Hellenistic, Early and Middle Islamic periods. However, the earlier radiocarbon dates should not be easily discarded.

Acknowledgements

I thank the Director of the as-Sila expedition, Rocío Da Riva, for providing me access to the radiocarbon studies, and to the interdisciplinary team for their great work processing the site's finds. My appreciation also to Gabriel Ore (Ben Gurion University of the Negev), for valuable discussion and for sending me Fig. 8, and to Khaled Al-Bashaireh (Yarmouk University), for sending me badly needed bibliography. The article was also greatly improved by the reviewer's very useful comments. Needless to say, the interpretation of this evidence and any mistakes that may have arisen in this article are my sole responsibility.

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HITTITE ROCK RELIEFS WITH MORE THAN ONE INSCRIPTION*

ANA ARROYO

ana.arroyo@uclm.es

Universidad de Castilla la Mancha

Ciudad Real, España

Summary: Hittite Rock Reliefs with More than One Inscription

Hittite rock reliefs may or may not be accompanied by an inscription. When this occurs, the general rule is that the inscription refers to the figure and indicates both the name and position of the person depicted. Both, figure and inscription, constitute a single unit which refers to a specific individual. Furthermore, in these cases the person represented and the commissioner of the relief are (assumed to be) the same individual. But there are at least three Hittite rock reliefs with more than one inscription for a single figure. How should these binary inscriptions be understood and interpreted? What is their relation to the figure? Is it possible to find a general interpretation for these three cases? This article aims to analyze the relation between binary inscriptions and figure representation in Hittite rock reliefs in order to provide possible explanations for this phenomenon.

Keywords: Hittite rock reliefs – Multiple inscriptions – Iconography

Resumen: Relieves hititas sobre roca con más de una inscripción

Los relieves hititas sobre roca pueden o no estar acompañados por una inscripción. Cuando lo están, la norma general es que la inscripción refiera a la figura e indique el nombre y el cargo de la persona representada. Ambas, figura e inscripción, forman una unidad que refiere a un individuo específico. Es más, en estos casos la persona representada y el promotor de la obra son (o se asume que son) la misma persona. Pero hay al menos tres relieves hititas sobre roca que presentan más de una inscripción ligada a una única figura. ¿Cómo deben entenderse e interpretarse estas inscripciones dobles?, ¿cuál es su relación con la figura?, ¿es posible hallar una explicación general

Article received: July 22, 2020; approved: November 10, 2020.

* This article comes from a paper of the same title that I read at Broadening Horizons 6 (Berlin, 24th–28th July 2019). I would like to thank the scholars who gave me their valuable comments and reading suggestions on that occasion.

para estos tres casos? El presente artículo analiza la relación entre estas inscripciones binarias y la representación de una figura humana en los relieves hititas sobre roca para aportar una posible explicación a este fenómeno.

Palabras clave: Relieves hititas sobre roca – Inscripciones múltiples – Iconografía

Hittite anthropomorphic rock reliefs may represent humans, such as Karabel—or gods, like the gods carved in Yazılıkaya—or sometimes both are depicted together in the same composition, as in İmankulu. Most of these reliefs, of humans and/or gods, are associated with an inscription written in Anatolian hieroglyphs¹ which identifies the figure.

In human representations, the hieroglyph reading order follows the orientation of the figure. That is, if the figure is facing to the right, the inscription must be read from right to left; and on the contrary, if the figure is oriented towards the left, the hieroglyphs are to be read from left to right. This is a rule that can be observed in all reliefs no matter where the inscription is located. In normal cases the inscription appears in front of the figure, and thus the image functions as an apposition of the inscription. But when the inscription is located behind the figure, it is the inscription which functions as an apposition of the figure.²

In the case of gods, the inscription contains the name of the deity and sometimes also an epithet, while in the case of humans, the inscription includes name, title or position, and sometimes also a filiation.

¹ I prefer this designation instead of “Luwian hieroglyphs,” first because it is detached from any discussion about the application of modern ethnological or ethnolinguistic and/or political categories to Ancient Anatolia, and second because although this type of writing might have been created to render Luwian (see, among others, Hawkins 2000: 2, n. 17; Hawkins 2013: 29), most of the first inscriptions “though possibly attributable *to* a language, are not *in* a language” (see Hawkins 2003: 140 [author’s italics]) and it was certainly used to transcribe languages other than Luwian, such as Hurrian and Hittite. This is demonstrated by various examples of names, like Puduḫepa in Firaktın, Šuppiluliuma in seals and the SUDBURG inscription and phonetically written gods’ names in Yazılıkaya. Other authors who use this terminology are Waal 2012; Hawkins 2013; Weeden 2014; D’Alfonso and Payne 2016. Authors who prefer the term “Luwian hieroglyphs” are, among others, de Martino 2016: 43. There are also scholars who speak only of “Hieroglyphic” such as Hawkins 2015: 1. A discussion on the origins of this writing can be found in Yakubovich 2010: 285–299; Waal 2012; Hawkins 2013: 29; Oreshko 2013: 345–346, 400–409.

² Arroyo 2015–2016: 381–382.

However, some rock reliefs are not associated with any inscription, such as Gavûrkalesi or Keben; while three of them are linked to more than one name: Akpınar, Hanyeri and Taşçı A. These three reliefs are an extraordinary exception to the aforementioned rule which states that the inscription functions as apposition to the figure or viceversa. How can a second inscription connected to a single figure be interpreted and what is the relation between this additional inscription and the image? Is there a single explanation for these three cases? The present article focuses on these three rock reliefs that contain more than one inscription and uses both seals and cuneiform texts to make comparisons and draw some conclusions regarding the meaning and possible interpretation of the additional inscriptions and their relation to the figure.

AKPINAR

The relief of Akpınar is located at the Manisa Dağ, classical Mount Sipylon, facing the River Gediz and above several springs. It is carved in a deep recess in the rock and represents a frontal figure in a poor state of preservation, probably unfinished. It has been interpreted as either a mountain god or a seated goddess—in any case a deity.³ This interpretation is supported by all other known Hittite frontal representations which are clearly gods, such as the figures of Eflatun Pınar, the stele of Fasıllar and the female figure in the İmankulu relief.

To the right of this relief there are two inscriptions, one of them closer, in relief and inside a square panel, AKPINAR 1; the other inscribed in the rock below the first, AKPINAR 2. Neither of them exhibit the sign DEUS, which, together with the presence of some titles, excludes the possibility that either could refer directly to the figure.

³ See Ehringhaus 2005: 87–91; Salvini 2011; Arroyo 2014: 80–84, with references.

AKPINAR 1 reads:

EXERCITUS-*mu(wa)* REX.FILIUS
 Kuwalanamuwa, Prince

AKPINAR 2, which is badly damaged but of which the first column can still be read, also comprises a name and a title:

zu(wa)-wa/i-ni EUNUCHUS₂
 Zuwani LÚ SAG⁴

The reading of the second column of AKPINAR 2 is still doubtful due to its poor preservation state. Poetto suggests that there is a title, maybe FLUMEN.DOMINUS, followed by URBS;⁵ D'Alfonso accepts three of the proposed readings of the previous author, but indicates that this line points to the provenience of Zuwani (FLUMEN^{tara/i??} (URBS));⁶ and finally, Oreshko reads a title with a phonetic complement (FLUMEN.DOMINUS-*i(a)*).⁷

Kuwalanamuwa might be identified with a member of the army of Muršili II mentioned in his Complete Annals as a high-level military official⁸ and maybe also with the man featured in the figures on the Hanyeri and İmankulu reliefs.⁹ The assumption that these three reliefs cannot belong to the same man and that this man cannot be equated with the official of Muršili's army because the practice of engraving reliefs on rock began with Muwatalli II in the 13th century BC¹⁰ may be contested. It is mostly based on the argument that, from this king onwards, kingship needed new forms of legitimacy through visual

⁴ For the equivalence of EUNUCHUS₂ with LÚ SAG, see Hawkins 2005: 303, with references. For this title see Mora 2011, with references; Bilgin 2018: 324–325, 340–345, 431–436. Torri 2010: 390; Torri 2016: 42, translates this title as “court official;” Miller 2013: 296 and Bilgin 2018: 325, as “courtier;” D'Alfonso 2017: 54, as “attendant.”

⁵ Poetto 1988: 175–176.

⁶ D'Alfonso 2017: 54–55.

⁷ Oreshko 2013: 370.

⁸ KUB 14.16 i 10: KARAŠ-mu-u-wa-aš-ša GAL LÚ[MES].

⁹ For these reliefs see Ehringhaus 2005: 76–80, 70–76; Arroyo 2014: 101–105, 105–108, with references; Hawkins 2015: 3–4. See also below.

¹⁰ See Ehringhaus 2005: 73, 121; de Martino 2010: 92–93; Bilgin 2018: 87.

propaganda and that this new cultural praxis was later adopted by some high-ranking members of Hittite society. However, this explanation is based on assumptions that cannot be proved and has become a piece of circular reasoning.¹¹ Therefore, the possibility that the first Hittite rock reliefs can be dated under the reign of Muršili II cannot be totally excluded.¹² Still, the possibility that the Kuwalanamuwa of the reliefs and texts was the same man remains speculative.

Kuwalanamuwa could also have been the owner of two seals found in Nişantepe¹³ with the title REGIO.DOMINUS and maybe also of another one from Büyükkale without any title.¹⁴ Despite the fact that AKPINAR 1 is linked to the title REX.FILIUS (DUMU.LUGAL), the Kuwalanamuwa of the inscription and seals might have been the same person if he was promoted to REGIO.DOMINUS after the inscription was made, or if he chose not to include this title in the inscription. Concerning the first possibility, two Hittite officials, Aranḫapilizzzi and Ḫannutti, could have been promoted to the post of Governor at the end of their careers,¹⁵ and Ḫutupiyanza—who was a DUMU.LUGAL and also a contemporary of Nuwanza, who, for his part, is attested together with a Kuwalanamuwa in KUB 14.16¹⁶—might have been appointed as Governor in Pala and Tummana as a further step in his military career.¹⁷ Regarding the second option, a seal of Nerikkaili (Kat. 651-652) refers to the owner as REGIO.DOMINUS, while another called him REGIO.DOMINUS REX.FILIUS.¹⁸ If the owner of these seals was the same man, it may indicate that both titles were not always written

¹¹ Clearly reflected in de Martino 2010: 93: “since these noblemen’s practice of engraving [...] rock reliefs **might be explained** as a form of emulation of royal conventions [...], it is unlikely that the Hanyeri and Imankulu reliefs can be dated prior to the monumental representations of Muwatalli II” [my emphasis]. See a complete discussion of the topic in Arroyo 2014: 117–122.

¹² See, among others, Kohlmeyer 1983: 85–86, 90; Glatz and Plourde 2011: 35, 56–57.

¹³ See Herbordt 2005: 147, Kat. 192–193, Taf. 15 (Bo. 90/606 and Bo 90/648).

¹⁴ Güterbock 1942: 70, Taf. III (SBo II Nr. 87).

¹⁵ Bilgin 2018: 82.

¹⁶ For him, see Bilgin 2018: 126–127.

¹⁷ Bilgin 2018: 76–78.

¹⁸ See also Bilgin 2018: 85–87.

together. A further example might be the seals of a certain *461-*521-*a*, who appears as REGIO.DOMINUS in one exemplar and as REX.FILIUS in two others.¹⁹ The match between the writing of the name Kuwalanamuwa in cuneiform (KARAS²⁰-*mu-u-wa*) and in hieroglyphs (EXERCITUS-*mu(wa)*) both in the inscription and in seals²⁰ might point to the same individual if the use of equivalent terms in cuneiform and hieroglyphic was a conscious choice. In that case, we might be dealing with the same man in AKPINAR 1 and the seals. In this sense, the Kulanamuwa (^m*Ku-la-na-mu-wa*) who sent a letter to a king of Ugarit should be identified with another Hittite official.²¹ If this identification of the man of AKPINAR 1 with an official of the Muršili's army is correct, Kuwalanamuwa might have been a Hittite military official based in Syria who was appointed as local governor.

For its part, the name Zuwani is attested in a tablet colophon as grandfather of a scribe²² and associated with the cities of Karkamiš and Ḫalpa in a very fragmentary letter.²³ Both texts exhibit a New Hittite script, which agrees with the probable date of the Kuwalanamuwa inscription, but as long as Zuwani is not associated with any title in any of these texts, it is doubtful that some or all of them could refer to the same individual. A seal from Nişantepe²⁴ bears the name Zuwani written identically to that in AKPINAR 2 but associated with the title AURIGA₂, so it is possible that they were different persons. The seal of Zuwanna with the title EUNUCHUS₂ does not pertain to the same individual as AKPINAR 2, because Zuwanna and Zuwani are different names.²⁵ Based on the paleography developed by D'Alfonso and Payne of the sign *439, *wa/i*—with the central element larger than the side ones and

¹⁹ See Bilgin 2018: 86.

²⁰ For KARAS²⁰ = EXERCITUS see Hawkins 2005: 292.

²¹ See Bilgin 2018: 87, and n. 281, with references.

²² KUB 10.96 1'–3': ^mGUR-LUGAL-*ma* (²¹)^mDUMU' ^m*Ḫal-pa-LU* (³¹)DUMU.DUMU-*ŠU ŠÁ* ^m*Zu-wa-an-ni*. See also Waal 2015: 545; Bilgin 2018: 338, n. 1267.

²³ KBo 18.76 rev. 5, 7, 14. See Hagenbuchner 1989: 154–155; Gordin 2015: 218. The name in KBo 18.110 rev. 4' is most probably to be read *Ku-wa-an-n[a]* instead of *Ku-wa-an-n[i]*, see Hagenbuchner 1989: 476, and the photograph of the tablet in [hethiter.net/fotarch B1179e](http://hethiter.net/fotarch/B1179e).

²⁴ Herbordt 2005: 211, 280, Kat. 544, Taf. 43. See also Gordin 2015: 218.

²⁵ Hawkins 2005: 280, 298–299, with references.

these latter in the shape of a circle,²⁶ D'Alfonso indicates that AKPINAR 2 should be dated after the collapse of the Hittite Empire, around 9th–8th cent B.C.²⁷ If the reading of the first two signs of the second line of this inscription is FLUMEN.DOMINUS (*212.*390), it would give further support to the proposal that AKPINAR 2 must be dated to post-Hittite times, for this title is attested nowhere in the Hittite period but is found in first millennium inscriptions.²⁸ However, this early date for AKPINAR 2 seems to be contradicted by the fact that EUNUCHUS₂ is not attested in Post-Hittite inscriptions.²⁹

Be that as it may, both names—Kuwalanamuwa and Zuwani—are exceptionally connected to a figure which does not represent either of them: the question is why these two men left their “signatures” next to this relief.

Considering that Zuwani's name is engraved and that all other known examples of inscribed names with titles can be safely interpreted as graffiti, such as those of SURATKAYA³⁰ and MALKAYA³¹ or even those documented in several places in the Hittite capital Ḫattuša,³² the most reasonable interpretation of this inscription is that it is also a graffito, as has been already pointed out.³³ Certainly, this one is much more difficult to engrave than any other known exemplar, but, however, it would still have been an engraving made on the spot, most probably by Zuwani himself.

²⁶ D'Alfonso and Payne 2016: esp. 124.

²⁷ D'Alfonso 2017: 55.

²⁸ See Oreshko 2013: 370 and n. 63. The reading of this title in the seal of Kaššu (Herbordt 2005: Kat. 158, Taf. 12) is only tentative for it is composed of two parallel straight lines, not of two parallel broken ones, see Hawkins 2005: 258.

²⁹ See Hawkins 2000; Payne 2012. In the first millennium is attested the Luwian word *wasi-nasi-/usinasi-* (sometimes preceded by the determinative *474, EUNUCHUS), which was equated by Hawkins with the Akkadian *ša rēši* and translated as “eunuch,” see Hawkins 2002: 229–232.

³⁰ For these, see Herbordt 2001; Peschlow-Bindokat 2002; Ehringhaus 2005: 91–94.

³¹ Ehringhaus 2005: 83.

³² See Arroyo 2014: 83, and n. 143; Marazzi 2016.

³³ André-Salvini and Salvini 1996: 7; Salvini 2011: 551; Hawkins 2015: 2.

On the other hand, Kuwalanamuwa's inscription is carved in relief and this prevents us from identifying it as a graffito *stricto sensu*. It was a planned action. But as long as Kuwalanamuwa is not identified with the figure, only two options are possible: either he was the author of both relief and inscription, or he was only the author of his own inscription. Without more information, neither can be proved. The first option is supported by textual sources on persons who ordered the creation of the image of another individual, such as the vow of Queen Puduhepa in her Prayer for the Goddess of Arinna (KUB 21.27 rev. iii 36'–42').³⁴ At least in one case it might be possible that the name of the promoter was linked to the figure of the person represented: in Šuppilulima II's inscription on the conquest of Alašiya (KBo 12.38 ii 4–14).³⁵ Therefore, the possibility that Kuwalanamuwa could have been the author of this relief cannot be totally excluded, although it is still very tentative. The second option, that Kuwalanamuwa made only his own inscription, is supported by Zuwani's inscription and possibly also by the second inscription of Hanyeri, which is discussed below.

As there is no indication of the bond between these two men their relation is unknown. Were they relatives? Was one of them, probably Zuwani, a subordinate of the other? Given the position of Zuwani's inscription below that of Kuwalanamuwa and its graffito character it is highly probable that it was engraved when the latter was already present on the rock, and is thus a later addition. And if AKPINAR 2 must be dated to the first millennium BC, then there was no relation between these men at all.

In any case, what can be inferred from these two inscriptions is that both men decided, independently of each other, to attach their names to a monumental figure, which, as such, and also because it was the image of a god, was considered culturally important. This was the basic reason why Kuwalanamuwa and Zuwani chose to link their names to the relief: its cultural significance. With a similar line of reasoning, but based on the assumption that Akpınar is a cult place,

³⁴ Daues and Rieken 2018: 438–439.

³⁵ Hoffner 2003; Bolatti, Guzzo and Marazzi 2004.

D'Alfonso interprets AKPINAR 1 as the connection of Kuwalanamuwa with "the production of cultic performance" and AKPINAR 2 as a *proskynema*,³⁶ an act of devotion toward a specific god.³⁷ The author considers that most of the Hittite rock reliefs were "clearly associated with the cult."³⁸ However, this assertion can only be proposed, and cautiously, for those reliefs that are associated with the so-called "cup-marks," for these concavities in the rock are most probably related to libations. Only the reliefs of Fıraktın, Sirkeli, Taşçı A and the cult place of Yazılıkaya are associated with "cup-marks," but even in these cases it is difficult to ascertain whether these holes were used for cultic purposes or for the performance of a magical ritual, which, obviously, was not necessarily connected to the cult. Springs and fountains were sacred places which had to be worshipped,³⁹ but this does not imply that Akpınar must have been a cult place, even if it is located above several springs, carved on a cliff and visible from afar.⁴⁰ The relief of Akpınar certainly *benefited* from this location, and most probably the presence of the springs determined its carving, but this does not mean that it was worshipped. In other words, the relief must not necessarily have been the object of a religious practice or worship,⁴¹ even in the sphere of personal religion, especially if it is considered that the figure is most probably unfinished—and thus that it was (and is) very difficult to ascertain which god it represented. Therefore, in my opinion, the evidence for considering AKPINAR 1 as the connection of Kuwalanamuwa with the cult and AKPINAR 2 as a *proskynema* is very weak. Instead, it seems to me more appropriate to understand these inscriptions as the form Kuwalanamuwa and Zuwani found to connected themselves with this significant cultural element. In this sense, and especially if AKPINAR 2 might be dated to Hittite times, a second pos-

³⁶ D'Alfonso 2017: 52, 54–55.

³⁷ Tallet 2012.

³⁸ D'Alfonso 2017: 52.

³⁹ Clearly stated in KUB 13.2 iii 4–7, Instructions of Arnuwanda I for the Frontier Post Governors, see Miller 2013: 228–229. On the topic of fountains and springs as deities see Arroyo 2014: 265–286.

⁴⁰ See Arroyo 2014: 219–221.

⁴¹ On this topic see Collins 2005: esp. 18–24.

sible reason for Zuwani's inscription could have been the prestige that the association of his name with that of Kuwalanamuwa would have given him.

HANYERİ

Hanyeri is located at the Gezbel Pass facing the valley of the Yagnık Çay and is surrounded by several springs.⁴² It also contains two male names with titles associated with a figure, but here it is clear that at least one of these inscriptions refers to the image, that in front of the figure's face, whose position and orientation both fulfil the condition of being close to the figure and oriented in the same direction. The inscription is the same as that of AKPINAR 1, although here the title "prince" precedes the name:

REX.FILIUS EXERCITUS-*mu(wa)*
Prince Ku(wa)lanamuwa

The second inscription, located behind and separate from the figure and written symmetrically, reads

REX.FILIUS TONITRUS.MANUS-*mi*
Prince Tarḥuntami⁴³

As we have seen, Kuwalanamuwa was probably the same man as that of AKPINAR 1, the İmankulu relief—located on the other side of the Gezbel Pass, and a member of Muršili's army. The name Tarḥuntami appears in at least nine seal impressions, either without a title or with that of scribe. All of them can be dated to the 13th century BC,⁴⁴ but it is uncertain that any of them belonged to the Tarḥuntami of this relief. As said—and contrary to the case of AKPINAR 1—the

⁴² See Ehringhaus 2005: 76–80; Arroyo 2014: 101–105.

⁴³ Hawkins 2005: 273; Hawkins 2015: 4. The sign *59, MANUS, is very similar to *39, PUGNUS, in two seals from Boğazköy that also pertain to a Tarḥuntami, a scribe, see Dinçol and Dinçol 2008: 64, 67, Taf. 31.

⁴⁴ Dinçol and Dinçol 2008: Kat. 177, 274–277, 321–322, 327; Herbordt 2005: Kat. 413.

name Kuwalanamuwa refers without doubt to the figure, and both of them, figure and inscription, are related to the pair of gods in front of them, REX MONS (DEUS)*SARMA*, Mountain king Šarruma, and ENSIS(DEUS+MONS), Mountain god Nergal.⁴⁵ These figures and inscriptions are the core of the relief which was carved in this particular location because of its cultural significance: in a mountain pass, facing a river and close to some springs.⁴⁶

But the inscription of Tarḫuntami needs to be explained, for there is no known relationship between the two individuals and its symmetry makes its relation to the figure problematic. Leaving aside the cultural significance of the spot, the same two possible explanations given for AKPINAR 1 can be advanced here: either Tarḫuntami was the author of the whole composition or he only carved his name. And again, neither of them can be proved. The first option, that someone not only promoted the carving of the relief of another person but also left his/her name in it, would be a one-off case in the whole corpus of reliefs on rocks—and even on steles—and would be only supported, although partially, by the text in which Šuppiluliuma II seems to include his name in the inscription he attached to the statue he constructed for his father Tudḫaliya IV (see above). The second option, that Tarḫuntami attached his name to Kuwalanamuwa's relief, can be explained by supposing that Tarḫuntami wanted to link himself to a (possible) member of Muṣili's army, a wealthy and well known man who might also have carved the relief of Imankulu and could be supported by AKPINAR 2. Besides, it seems that the area prepared on the rock to provide a uniform surface in which the composition could be carved also includes Tarḫuntami's inscription. This would indicate that his name was engraved as part of the original design. If that were the case, it would support the first option, that Tarḫuntami was the author of the whole relief. But it would also open the door to a third possibility:

⁴⁵ Arroyo 2014: 102. See also Hawkins 2015: 4.

⁴⁶ Arroyo 2014: 104–105. Hawkins 2015: 1, 4 indicates the sanctity of this relief, but as has been argued before, it is hard to ascertain this characteristic only on the basis of the presence of the gods' figures.

that Tarḥuntami could have been the second name of Kuwalanamuwa.⁴⁷

Actually, ten seals found at Nişantepe seem to bear the names of two individuals.⁴⁸ As in the case of AKPINAR and HANYERİ, all of them belong to high dignitaries and none contains any reference to the kind of relationship that bonded the persons mentioned in them. Two of these seals (Kat. 200 and 631) bear a male and a female name, have been interpreted as belonging to couples and are of no use here. In two more exemplars (Kat. 270 and 604) the reading of a second name in the hieroglyphs associated with the main onomastic is doubtful. The last 6 seals seem to display two male names (Kat. 19, 10, 68, 404, 355, 441). Of these, only two exemplars (Kat. 19 and 404) also show a figure, a detail that links them to our rock reliefs. In one of these seals (Kat. 19), the name in the center (*nú-sà+US(?)*) could refer either to the goddess, Šauška, or to a second man, Šaḥurunu(wa). In both cases the reading is problematic.⁴⁹ In the second seal (Kat. 404) the figure of the man is accompanied by his name placed below his arm, but the figure of the stag could be either the first part (*CERVUS*₂) of the name Kuruntiya⁵⁰ or a depiction of the stag god.⁵¹ Considering the whole scene of the seal in which the man faces the stag, and the position of the human figure,⁵² the second option seems more reasonable to me. In conclusion, the reading of a second male name in both seals is uncertain. In addition, the fact that double names are only attested with certainty in royal seals, and that in them one name is always Hurrian, seems to preclude this hypothesis.⁵³ Therefore, the explanation that two names in seals or reliefs point to individuals related either by their roles or by family bonds seems more appropriate. However, the absence of any indication of the relationship that bonded these men avoids the clarifi-

⁴⁷ Hawkins 2005: 278. But see also Mora 1988: 165, n. 24.

⁴⁸ On this topic see Mora 1988; Herbordt 2005: 116–117, 125, 148, 161, 177, 186, 193, 220, 225 *sub* Kat. 10, 19, 68, 200, 270, 355, 404, 441, 604, 631; and Hawkins 2005 under these same catalog numbers.

⁴⁹ Hawkins 2005: 249.

⁵⁰ Hawkins 2005: 272

⁵¹ Herbordt 2005: 186.

⁵² Arroyo 2019: 37–39.

⁵³ See Hawkins 2011: 95; de Martino 2011: esp. 18.

cation of this phenomenon. Still, the comparison between seals and rock reliefs indicates that the presence of two names in the same composition was not so exceptional.

Summary of the Conclusions Reached for the First Two Reliefs

The two names next to the figure of Akpınar were certainly carved at different times; the name Zuwani is a graffito, while the one of Kuwalanamuwa might refer to the author of the relief. In both cases it was the cultural significance of the figure and the place in which it is located what led both men to inscribe their names on the rock. From the two names of Hanyeri, the name Kuwalanamuwa is directly related to the figure and was certainly part of the core relief, while Tarḫuntami might refer either to the author of the whole composition or to a second individual who wanted to link himself to a renowned man. In this case too, the cultural significance of the location of this relief was the basic reason behind its carving.

TAŞCI A

Taşcı A is located on a rock facing the River Döküksuyu, a tributary of the Zamantı, and is the most unusual rock relief of the whole corpus.⁵⁴ Unlike all the other exemplars except Taşcı B, it is engraved into the rock instead of being worked in relief. In addition, it comprises three figures, the inscriptions connected to these figures are located above them, and behind the third individual there are two male names with filiations and titles that are not related to any figure. However, and in contrast to Akpınar and Hanyeri, in this case the filiations allow us to connect these names with a figure. The two first male figures are linked to their names, which are unfortunately too damaged to be read. However, they do not represent any significant variation on the general model (see above). It is the third figure, the female one, and the inscrip-

⁵⁴ See Ehringhaus 2005: 65–68; Arroyo 2014: 92–96.

tion behind her that constitute an extraordinary exception. This odd inscription is currently not attested so far elsewhere in Hittite representations, whether on rock, orthostats or steles, or even in seals. It reads as follows:

ma-na-a-zi/a **FILIA** // *lu-pa-ki* EXERCITUS.SCRIBA **FILIUS** // VIR-
á HASTARIUS // MAGNUS.REX *ḪATTI+li* MAGNUS.REX HEROS
SERVUS

Manazi, daughter // (of) Lupakki, scribe of the army, son //
 (of) Zida, *MEŠEDI*, // servant of the Great King, Ḫattušili,
 Great King, Hero

Although the orientation of this inscription follows the general rule (that is, it corresponds to that of the figure) three features make it highly unusual: 1) the long filiation, 2) that this filiation belongs to a woman, and 3) that the position of “daughter” and “son” before the name of the father contradicts the normal position of the filiation in hieroglyphic inscriptions.⁵⁵ In them, terms such as “daughter” or “son” always follow the father’s name, like **SERVUS** here follows the name and title of the king Ḫattušili (III). Such is the case of all other known inscriptions like **KARABEL A**.⁵⁶

REX TARKASNA-*wa/i* REX *mi+ra/i-a* // AVIS/*zi₄-li* REX *mi+ra/i-a*
 REGIO [**FILIUS**] // [...] *ra/i(?)* REX *mi+ra/i-a* REGIO **NEPOS**

King Tarkasnawa, King of Mira // [son of] AVIS/ *zi₄-li*, King of
 Mira // grandson of [...] *ra(?)*, King of Mira

SIRKELI 1⁵⁷

mu(wa)-tà-li MAGNUS.REX HEROS URBS+MINUS-*li* MAGNUS.REX
 HEROS **FILIUS**

Muwatalli, Great King, Hero, son of Muršili, Great King, Hero

⁵⁵ Meriggi 1975: 311; Kohlmeyer 1983: 77; and Hawkins 2005: 293 point to this unusual position of the filiation.

⁵⁶ See Ehringhaus 2005: 90; Arroyo 2014: 98.

⁵⁷ See Ehringhaus 2005: 98; Arroyo 2014: 111.

HATIP⁵⁸

CERVUS₂-*ti* MAGNUS.REX [HEROS] *mu(wa)-tà-li* MAGNUS.REX
HEROS **FILIUS**

Kurunti(ya), Great King [Hero], son of Mu(wa)talli, Great King, Hero

or HEMITE⁵⁹

á-TONITRUS REX.FILIUS // TONITRUS-*pt'/lī'*.VIR[?] REX.FILIUS **FILIUS**

á-Tarḫunta, prince // son of Tarḫuntapi/-li/ziti, prince

Only in two seals from Emar the filiation of the owner is clearly written in hieroglyphs. In them, the sign **FILIUS**, “son,” follows the name of the father, as it is usual in this type of writing.⁶⁰

Instead, when filiations are written in cuneiform, terms such as “son” always precede the father’s name; either in tablets, as for example in the so-called *Bronzetafel* (Bo 86/299) i 1–3:

(¹)*UM-MA ta-ba-ar-na* ^m*Tu-ut-ḫa-li-ya* LUGAL.GAL LUGAL
KUR ^{URU}*Ḫa-at-ti* UR.SAG (²)**DUMU** ^m*Ḫa-at-tu-ši-li*
LUGAL.GAL LUGAL KUR ^{URU}*Ḫa-at-ti* UR.SAG
(³)**DUMU.DUMU-ŠU** *ŠA* ^m*Mur-ur-ši-li* LUGAL.GAL
LUGAL KUR ^{URU}*Ḫa-at-ti* UR.SAG⁶¹

(¹)Thus (speaks) the Labarna Tudḫaliya, Great King, King of the land of Ḫatti, Hero, (²)son of Ḫattušili, Great King, King of the land of Ḫatti, Hero, (³)grandson of Muršili, Great King, King of the land of Ḫatti, Hero;

Or in the outer rings of some seals, as in this one of Šuppiluliuma

⁵⁸ See Ehringhaus 2005: 102; Arroyo 2014: 77.

⁵⁹ See Ehringhaus 2005: 108; Arroyo 2014: 85.

⁶⁰ Ring seals B1 and round seal of Kuzi-Teššub—maybe also B55 and C4—, see Beyer 2001: 117–121, Pl. E (B1), 140, Pl. F, 25a (B55), 153 (Kuzzi-Teššub), 154, Pl. F (C4). See also Laroche 1983: 18; Mora 1998: 203, 207.

⁶¹ Otten 1988: 10.

I:

^mŠu-^rup-pí-lu¹-li-u-ma LUGAL.GAL UR.SAG / **DUMU** ^mDu-
ut-ḥa-li-ya LUGAL.GAL UR.SAG;⁶²

Šuppiluliuma; Great King, Hero / son of Tuthaliya, Great King, Hero.

These examples confirm that at present the inscription of Taşçı A is unique in this respect. The absence of any known parallel for a filiation written in hieroglyphs which precedes the name of the father clearly points to the cuneiform pattern. The position of these inscriptions above and behind the figure of Manazi and their reading order matching the orientation of her figure leave no doubt that they refer to her, but the reason why the normal writing order has been inverted is not clear, especially given that this anomaly is not found in any other example. The logical explanation is that the person who carved the inscription adapted the cuneiform pattern to the writing in hieroglyphs.

Concerning the term *SERVUS*, it is also odd that it has been placed in the normal position for hieroglyph inscriptions, after the name and titles of the person who is served, in this case the king Ḫattušili. This fact contrasts with the two previous filiations; how can this difference be explained? One interpretation is that *SERVUS* refers to Lupakki and not to Zida.⁶³ Its position at the end of the inscription and not attached to Zida's name prevents us from identifying Zida as servant of Ḫattušili instead of Lupakki. However, this proposal does not explain why both filiations are displaced, while *SERVUS* is located correctly. Moreover, if *SERVUS* refers to Lupakki, this filiation is an apposition, which is not attested anywhere. In my opinion, this interpretation poses more questions than it answers. Following a similar line of reasoning, the term *SERVUS* could refer to all three individuals referred to here,⁶⁴ but this would again be a one-off case and does not explain why *SERVUS* is correctly located while *FILIA* and *FILIUS* are not.

⁶² Herbordt, Bawanypeck and Hawkins 2011: 110, Kat. 8, Taf. 1.

⁶³ Hawkins 2005: 293.

⁶⁴ Implicitly suggested by Hawkins 2015: 3: "TAŞÇI with its procession of servants of Ḫattusili."

The position of the whole inscription on the rock could give us some clues for solving the question. The woman's name, Manazi, is placed in the same manner as the two men's names, in front and above her figure, thus following the layout of the composition. Her filiation, instead, occupies the space above and behind her figure, enclosing it and leaving no doubt that these two names with filiations should be related to her. But the position of both name and epithet of the king are totally dislocated. They do not follow the expected line behind the last filiation, but instead are located slightly above them. Furthermore, the title SERVUS is also displaced with respect to the king's name, placed below the title HEROS and not behind it. These unusual locations cannot be explained through limitations imposed by the rock surface—as has been done regarding other rock reliefs⁶⁵—because there is plenty of space available. In my opinion, it is a later addition, most probably not made by the same person who made the first part of this inscription. This would explain why SERVUS is correctly located at the end of the inscription. It could have been made either for the purpose of giving Manazi's filiation more prestige, or in reference to all the persons represented, also giving them a certain prestige by their relation to the king.

Summing up, Manazi's filiation follows the cuneiform pattern known from texts and outer ring seals belonging to the monarchy, while the link with the king Hattušili through the term SERVUS clearly follows the pattern of hieroglyphic inscriptions and seems to have been an addition referring to Zida, or to Lupakki or even to all those depicted, but in any case it was written with the intention of conferring more prestige on the relief.

CONCLUSIONS

The presence of more than one name in these three reliefs—as in seals—has no single explanation, and thus each case must be analyzed independently. In the reliefs of Akpınar and Hanyeri the names either

⁶⁵ Kohlmeyer 1983: 92–93.

belonged to different persons bonded by family or professional ties or there was no relation at all between these men. As long as there is no indication of the relationship between these persons, and unfortunately prosopography is of no help, there is no current possibility of establishing links between them with any reliability. The relief of Taşçı A is a case on its own, with both a filiation and a professional tie, but the terms “son” and “daughter” incorrectly located, following the cuneiform pattern, while the term “servant” is correctly written after the name of the king. In all these three reliefs, Akpınar, Hanyeri and Taşçı A, the possibility of a later addition must be considered.

Despite all these peculiarities and difficulties one conclusion can be reached: it was the cultural significance of the place in which the reliefs were located that motivated these individuals to inscribe their names on the rock and attached to a figure.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON XERXES'S “DAIVA” INSCRIPTION AND ITS INTERPRETATION

CLAUDIO S. HUAYNA ÁVILA
huayna@stud.uni-heidelberg.de
Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg
Heidelberg, Germany

Summary: Some Thoughts on Xerxes's “Daiva” Inscription and its Interpretation

The so-called “*daiva* inscription” of the Persian king Xerxes I (*ca.* 486–465 BC) is one of the most intriguing documents of the Achaemenid kings, mainly due to the mention of the word that gives this text its name. The sole mention of this word has led scholars to believe that this text marks an unprecedented turning point in Persian history: the one presenting the Great King as a religious fanatic, strengthening the image handed down to us by Greek historiography—especially the one of Herodotus. Four interpretative models have been postulated to understand this word's function, three of which have identified the Persian *daivas* with specific historical agents and events. The last one focuses instead on the nature of the textual content in a broader sense. Further problems arise when dealing with the question of when this text was crafted. This conundrum was mainly understood through the view of Greek historiography, disregarding much of the contradictory evidence that will be presented here.

Keywords: Xerxes – “Daiva” inscription – Achaemenid religion – Royal legitimation

Resumen: Algunas reflexiones acerca de la inscripción “Daiva” de Jerjes y su interpretación

La llamada inscripción “*daiva*” del rey persa Jerjes I (*ca.* 486–465 a.C.) es uno de los documentos más intrigantes de los reyes aqueménidas, debido principalmente a la mención de la palabra que da nombre a dicho texto. La sola mención de esta palabra ha llevado a investigadores a creer que este texto marca un punto de inflexión sin precedentes en la historia persa: el que presenta al Gran Rey como un fanático religioso, fortaleciendo la imagen que nos ha sido legada por la historiografía griega—especialmente la de Heródoto. Se han postulado cuatro modelos interpretativos para com-

Article received: October 2, 2020; approved: January 25, 2021.

prender la función de esta palabra, tres de los cuales han identificado a los *daivas* persas con agentes y acontecimientos históricos específicos. El último se centra, en cambio, en la naturaleza del contenido textual en un sentido más amplio. Otros problemas surgen al tratar la cuestión de cuándo fue elaborado este texto. Este enigma se entendió principalmente a través de la visión de la historiografía griega, sin tenerse en cuenta gran parte de las pruebas contradictorias que se presentarán aquí.

Palabras clave: Jerjes – Inscripción “Daiva” – Religión aqueménida – Legitimación real

INTRODUCTION

For many centuries, the understanding of Achaemenid history was the direct result of Greek historiographic analysis, from which Herodotus took a central role. The Persians are depicted as the barbarians *per excellence*, as the others in relation to the Greeks, especially to the Athenians. Thanks to the deciphering of the Old Persian cuneiform script in the nineteenth century, new perspectives on Persian history were opened to indagate, and at the same time, the academic world witnessed the birth of a new study field—Assyriology. The Achaemenid inscriptions offered the possibility to deal with primary sources that can either confirm, refute, or complement the overbearing Greek perspective. Although almost all of these texts present quite similar themes and motives, some stand out for their length, narrative detailing, and peculiar vocabulary. The *daiva* inscription undoubtedly accentuates this last feature, named after this peculiar word that makes a brief but quite intriguing appearance. This text is of great importance due to its unique subject matter without parallel in other Achaemenid royal inscriptions, dealing with activities, according to many scholars, of religious intolerance. Throughout the years, much ink has been spilled on this conundrum. Why was this word used only in this particular setting? What does this word mean within the context of the inscription itself and Xerxes’s reign? Is it related to Xerxes’s—and thus, Darius’s and other Achaemenid kings’—alleged Zoroastrian belief? This paper will deal with all these questions and shed some light on this puzzle’s neglected aspects. The article is thematically divided into two parts. In the first

part, the central questions revolve around the inscription itself and its content—discovery, dating problems, and reliable information. In the second part, the interpretative models and their methodological plausibility will be fully addressed.

DISCOVERY

On 26 June 1935, an expedition of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago led by E. F. Schmidt discovered the so-called *daiva* inscription (henceforth XPh) at the garrison quarters at the southeastern corner of the royal palace in Persepolis, the Old Persian residential town.¹ Overall, four copies of this inscription were found—two in Old Persian, one in Babylonian and another one in Elamite—, as well as three copies of the so-called *harem* inscription (henceforth XPf), which tells us about Xerxes's succession (*ca.* 486 BC) to the throne after his father's death, Darius the Great (*ca.* 522–486 BC).

The Old Persian copies of XPh were cataloged as "A" and "B." Copy A, the only complete one, has a length of 60 lines. Copy B is an incomplete replica since the edges of the limestone slab are unfilled, the text ends abruptly on line 51 and lines 28, 29, 30 are considerably damaged. The other two exemplars have a length of 50 lines each, and only the Babylonian version was found in full condition.² Both Old Persian reproductions are nearly indistinguishable since they exhibit the same line break and word distribution.³ The only differences between them are limited to certain characters on lines 31, 37, and 45. Thankfully, this divergence does not alter its content.⁴

¹ Schmidt 1939: 11–15.

² The missing piece of the Elamite version was found in 1957 by Ali Sami, director of the Archeological Institute of Persepolis, and, two years later, the complete version was published in Cameron 1959.

³ Herzfeld 1937: 62.

⁴ Herzfeld 1937: 62. The distinctions are restricted exclusively to the lack of cuneiform signs: "In 31, the *pa* of *upariy* lacks the two small verticals in A, but is complete in B. In 37, the final character *na* (in *daivadanam*) is correct in A, but is miswritten *va* in B, probably because *va* ends the preceding line. In 45, the *ma* of *mai*y lacks the small middle vertical in B" (cf. Kent 1937: 293).

A third replica (XMa, *i.e.*, Xerxes in Murgahb) was discovered in 1961 by the British Institute of Persian Studies led by David Stronach at the citadel Tall-i Takhr in Pasargadae as a cover plate of a drain grave. As copy B, we are dealing with an incomplete inscription, for its upper left corner, lines 1 through 8, 50 through 57, 58 through 60 are severely damaged. However, this is an exact copy of those found in Persepolis. There are no variations among its text and copy A and B, the word distribution and the cuneiform characters are in almost exact order. As Stronach has clearly emphasized, its great significance lies more in the circumstances of the discovery itself rather than in the linguistic quality, from which nothing new can be asserted. The discovery of such an inscription in Pasargadae must be interpreted as an impressive indication of the continuous attention given to this palace during Xerxes's reign long after Cyrus's death.⁵

As far as the complete copy's—as well as the others'—physical condition is concerned, XPh was crafted on one single clay tablet-shaped limestone slab with engraved text on four sides (two 27-line stone slabs—front and back—and two 3-line stone slabs—upper and lower). The dimensions are 51x51 cm for the 27-line stone slab and 10x51 cm for the 3-line stone slab. In terms of their shape, form, and particularly the production method, it is rightly presumed that the copies were intended to be displayed as foundation documents but, for unknown reasons, never used in the intended manner.⁶

DATING ATTEMPTS

Since the first dating attempts made by E. Herzfeld in 1937 and 1938, the scholarship agreed predominantly with him. In his view, XPh should be dated to the Great King's first years.⁷ In order to back up this assumption, the following arguments were presented:

⁵ Stronach 1978: 152.

⁶ Cf. Schmidt 1939: 12; Cameron 1959: 470; Schmitt 2000: 88; Briant 2002: 550–554; Schmitt 2009: 20, 164.

⁷ Herzfeld 1937: 64; Herzfeld 1938: 470.

- Firstly, this can be assumed due to the inscription's indisputable linguistic affinities with Darius's tomb inscription in Naqsh-e Rostam (DNa).
- The second point lies in the unique wording used in XPh: Xerxes addressed himself as "the King" and not as "the Great King." On the third, fourth and seventh paragraphs,⁸ the following sentence thus appears: "Proclaims Xerxes, the King" (*Θāti Xšāyāršā, xšāyaθiya*). In later inscriptions, however, the following phrase is used instead: "Proclaims Xerxes, the Great King" (*Θāti Xšāyāršā, xšāyaθiya vazrka*).⁹
- XPh content revolves around events immediately after Xerxes's rise to power.
- The situation on how the country list was drawn up is even more compelling. By further inspection, it would be indeed possible to gain a reliable date:

*Sie erwähnt zwei Gruppen von Ioniern 'die im Meere' und 'die jenseits des Meeres'. Die ersten sind die echten Ionier der Westküste und Inseln Kleinasiens, die zweiten die von Dareios Yaunā takabarā genannten Makedonier. In den späteren Skulpturen des Xerxes erscheinen die Ionier den geschichtlichen Ereignissen gemäß nicht mehr. Ihre Erscheinung in der Liste lehrt, dass diese vor Salamis geschrieben ist. Das Datum liegt also zwischen 486 und 480 fest, näher an 486.*¹⁰

For Herzfeld, a decisive dating factor is the reference of the Ionian dwelling in the sea, a.k.a. Greeks living on the west coast of Asia Minor.

⁸ The paragraph sequence corresponds to the one laid out by Schmitt 2009. By using this one, we will encounter one considerable challenge, for it is, let us say, inconsistent with the traditional inscription paragraph sequence used by Herzfeld 1937, Herzfeld 1938, Kent 1937, Cameron 1959. The difference relays mainly upon the fourth paragraph; for the former, XPh has seven paragraphs in total, but for the latter authors, it has only five sections: for Schmitt, §4 equal to §4a, §5 equals to §4b, §6 equals to §4c and §7 equals to §5.

⁹ All Old Persian texts will be presented not in the original cuneiform, but rather in the phonemic transcription. On the phonemic transcription, Schmitt 2009; Schmitt 2014.

¹⁰ Herzfeld 1937: 64–65. The *Yaunā takabarā* make an appearance in DNa §3 and are accordingly translated into English as "the peltē-wearing Ionians" (Schmitt 2000) and into German as "die schildtragenden Griechen" (Schmitt 2009). The country list of XPh will be intensively addressed below.

R. Kent did not only coincide with Herzfeld's points but also tried to reinforce his hypothesis. He argued that the wording at the beginning of the fourth paragraph (lines 28 and 29) implies indeed that Xerxes recently became king: "Proclaims Xerxes the King: When I became king ..." (*Θāti Xšāyaršā, xšāyaθiya: yaθā taya adam xšāyaθiya abavam...*).¹¹ Similarly, Herzfeld's second argument was adopted, especially since Kent agreed that the phrase "Xerxes, the King" will be replaced by the expression "Xerxes, the Great King" on later inscriptions. Finally, defending Herzfeld's last argument, he advocated for a country list dating preceding Salamis and Plataea.¹²

For Kent, there would not be anything else to dispute—at least in this regard. The only criticism he gave is related to the interpretation of the *daiva* report. For Herzfeld, XPh illustrates inner-Iranian religious conflicts that may be well attributed to Darius's religious tolerance policies and may have extended into Xerxes's reign. Such conflicts would have been well led by Median Magi, the highest priests in the Persian empire, whose influence and power would have been threatened by the introduction of a new uniform, anti-sacrificial religion. Kent saw the situation completely different since he argued the *daivas* should only be interpreted as foreign gods.¹³

Basically V. Struve not only followed Herzfeld's dating approach but also introduced a new argument that would further support an inscription early date. The formula at the beginning of the seventh section ("Me may Ahuramazda protect from evil, and my palace and this land": *mām A.uramazdā pātu hacā gastā utamaj viθam utā imam dahyāvam*) will be replaced in later inscriptions by: "Me may Ahuramazda protect, together with the gods, and my kingdom and what I have done" (*mām A.uramazdā pātu hadā bagaiḅiš utamaj xšačam utā*

¹¹ Kent 1937: 305.

¹² Kent 1936: 214.

¹³ Kent 1936: 214–215. Cf. Hartmann 1937; Herzfeld 1937: 70ff.; Frye 1984. On the Persian Magi and their role, Ahn 1992: 100ff.; Trampedach 2017. All these theories will be further discussed below.

tayamai krtam).¹⁴ Furthermore, Struve claimed that there are several linguistic parallelisms amongst XPh und XPf, such as the invocation mentioned above. Consequently, if XPf informs us of Xerxes's rise to power and belongs to the king's early days, XPh should analogically fit into Xerxes's first years.¹⁵

Admittedly, Struve's new approach is worth analyzing. It is undoubtedly remarkable that, for example, every Xerxes's inscription using the formula "proclaims Xerxes, the Great King" comes exclusively from Persepolis, or it was discovered there.¹⁶ There is as well an astonishing regularity between the last invocation ("me may Ahuramazda protect, together with the gods") and the utilization of the phrase "proclaims Xerxes, the Great King." However, do such regularities corroborate that those inscriptions belong to a later date than other inscriptions? Is this the only and decisive criterion, according to which XPh would *ex negativo* belong at an earlier point in time? On further analysis, it can be demonstrated that Struve's logic cannot be convincing enough because it is arbitrary and even tendentious to try discovering similarities only between both documents without including other royal inscriptions. XPh is a type of source that fits extraordinarily well into the Achaemenid royal inscription corpus. XPh is, therefore, a text which has numerous affinities, both on a linguistic and a content level, with other royal inscriptions not only from Xerxes himself but also from Darius. Would it then be, agreeing with Struve's logic, that, if there were

¹⁴ Struve 1968: 115. Cf. Ghirshman 1976: 5ff. To be found in XSc, XVa.

¹⁵ Although not explicitly stated by Struve, I think this similitude between both inscriptions relies on the fact that XPh was discovered together with three exemplars of XPf.

¹⁶ In Schmitt's Achaemenid inscriptions corpus, a total of 26 inscriptions falls into Xerxes's lifetime. 19 out of 26 come from Persepolis (three from Elvend and surroundings, three from Susa, and one from Van). Of these 19 inscriptions, four contain the sentence "proclaims Xerxes, the Great King" (XPb, XPc, XPd, and XPg). The sentence "proclaims Xerxes, the King" can only be found in six inscriptions (XPa, XPf, XPh, XPj, XPi, and XPm). It is conspicuous that in one out of the four inscriptions, the invocation cited by Struve appears "me may Ahuramazda protect together with the gods (...)" and in four out of the other six inscriptions, the first invocation: "me may Ahuramazda protect (...)" (in XPj and XPm this sentence is nowhere to be found). However, two inscriptions belong to the exception, namely the XSc and XVa, because in each of them the sentence "proclaims Xerxes, the King" with the formula "me may Ahuramazda protect together with the gods (...)" appear.

similarities among XPh, DNa, and DBa—which are also exceptionally well attestable—,¹⁷ both inscriptions must be dated to the same period? Would it as well mean that, if there were similarities between what Struve believed to be early and late inscriptions—which is also well provable—,¹⁸ both inscription groups would undisputedly belong in the same period? In my opinion, this is a weak criterion for the inscription date, assuredly recognized by the fact that his approach did not draw any substantial attention amongst his peers and future scholars.

Criticism of Herzfeld's dating method arose throughout the years, so much so that he felt compelled to rectify his original conclusion. Instead of defending a date before Salamis, he claimed XPh had to be made right after Salamis, namely between 479 and 472, arguing that the mainland Greeks do not seem to be mentioned on the inscription. Eventually, he decided for the year 478, having, yet again, as center of his argumentation the circumstances in which the Ionians are depicted.¹⁹ Both dating corrections can be understood by the fact that, on the one hand, the Greeks dwelling in Asia Minor do not seem to be mentioned on the country list (third paragraph).²⁰ On the other hand, Xerxes is merely addressed as “the King” and not as “the Great King.” Due to the

¹⁷ The country list introductions of both XPh §3, DNa §3, and DB §6 are virtually identical. The only discrepancy concerns the following sentence in DNa §3, 17: “these [are] the countries, which I seized” (*imā dahyāva tayā adam agrbāyam*). Instead, the next sentence appears in XPh §3, 15: “these [are] the countries, of which I was king” (*imā dahyāva tayaišām adam xšāyaθiya āham*). In contrast, we can observe in DB the following: “these [are] the countries, which fell to my lot” (*imā dahyāva tayā manā patiyāiša*). Other similitudes can be found in the first two paragraphs with minor disparities: The kings' names and titles. How the first two paragraphs of XPh were composed indicates doubtlessly that Darius's inscriptions, especially DB and DNa, served as a pattern to be followed by the next kings. This phenomenon is also well attested in other inscriptions, such as XEa, XPa, XPb, XPc, XPd, Xpf, and XVa.

¹⁸ For instance, the first two paragraphs (the introduction and royal titles) are identical in the large inscriptions. For XFa, XIa, XPe, XPg, XPi, XPj, XPk, XPl, XPm, XPn, XPo, XPP, XPq, XPp, and XPs, the introduction and the following section are dissimilar since these are either small or fragmentary inscriptions, except for XPg, and XPl.

¹⁹ Herzfeld 1947: 395ff.; Herzfeld 1968: 350ff: “The fact that the Ionians are absent from the list in §3 and that the loss is silently admitted, precludes from the beginning the possibility of interpreting the following paragraphs as an account of the king's triumphal entry into Athens.”

²⁰ This point was already dissented by Schmitt 1972 (cf. also Klinkott 2005: 80). In his examination, the Persian wording granted to the Ionians (*Yauna tayai drayahyā*) does not correspond

omission of the Greeks dwelling in Asia Minor, a direct consequence of the Persian failure in Europe, as well as the incomplete royal titles, XPh must be dated after the Persian campaign against Hellas. Unfortunately, his new dating effort was not much acknowledged by fellow scholars, so that this remark has remained almost unnoticed.

One of the few supporters of this new approach was R. Schmitt. In one article published on the occasion of the 2500th anniversary of fellow foundation of the Iranian empire, he outlined the royal title development and addressed "*das letzte Glied des von Dareios zu Beginn seiner Regierungszeit geführten Titels*" (xšāyaθiya dahyūvnām):

Diese Wendung (...) wird unter Dareios auch erweitert um das Adjektiv vispazana-, „alle Stämme umfassend“. Dies wird aber seinerseits von Xerxes ab (...) zu paruzana-, „viele Stämme umfassend“ variiert. Hier wird also überdeutlich der in vispazana- erhobene Anspruch der Weltherrschaft (...) widerrufen, und man darf zuversichtlich behaupten, dass die Ereignisse von Marathon, Salamis und Plataiai der Grund hierfür gewesen sind. Xerxes begnügt sich als „König der Länder, die viele Stämme umfassen“ mit der Charakterisierung seines Reiches als eines ‚Vielvölkerstaates‘, und in der Tat werden die Achaimenidenkönige ja nicht müde, in langen Listen all die von ihnen beherrschten Länder bzw. Völker aufzuzählen oder sie andererseits auf bildlichen Darstellungen dem Betrachter in ihrer Vielzahl ebenso wie in ihrer Verschiedenartigkeit vor Augen zu führen.²¹

This title "renunciation" would represent an undoubtful result of the revocation of Xerxes's pretensions to world supremacy only explained by the events after Salamis and Plataea. On the one hand, the title degradation could only be explained through the Persian failure

to Cyprus, Herzfeld's assumption, but rather to the Daskylitic satrapy or the Greeks dwelling in Northwestern Asia Minor.

²¹ Schmitt 1977: 388.

campaign. On the other hand, this would also strongly suggest, although *ex silentio*, that the Hellas campaign would have had the same relevance both for the Greeks and the Persians—which is doubtful. As criticism, G. Ahn's remarks seem to be strikingly revealing and, at the very least, compelling:

*Diese Sichtweise erweist sich bei näherem Hinsehen als stark von der herodoteischen Euphorie über den Ausgang der griechisch-persischen Auseinandersetzung geprägt; was jedoch für die Griechen ein Existenzkampf um ihre Freiheit war, muss für Xerxes nicht zwangsläufig dieselbe Bedeutung besessen haben. Bezeichnenderweise fehlt jegliche Einschätzung der Vorgänge von persischer Seite, so dass nicht einmal der Grund für den Abbruch der Unternehmung näher bekannt ist.*²²

By carrying on with his argumentation, he comes to the following conclusion: “*Eine genaue Analyse macht sogar deutlich, dass die Titel der einzelnen Formulare gegeneinander austauschbar sind.*” Ahn rightfully argues that this parallelism, as well as the word interchangeability, can be even traced back to Darius's inscriptions since both words *vispazana-* and *paruzana-* reaffirm a universal claim to power:

*Für diese Vermutung kann zwar die wohl in die Xerxeszeit zu datierende Inschrift DE, die den Text von DNa 1–13 bis auf ‚paruzanānām‘ statt ‚vispazanānām‘ wortwörtlich zitiert, nicht als Zeuge herangezogen werden, wohl aber der Titel des Dareios in DPe 3f. ‚xšāyaθiya dahyūvnām paruzanānām‘ – „König der vielen Länder“. Die Rede von der Herrschaft über viele Länder ist also kein Spezifikum einer Zeit, die sich durch militärische Misserfolge zu bescheiden gelernt hat. Die Titel „König der Länder“, „König der vielen Länder“, „König der Länder aller Rassen“ und „König auf der ganzen Erde“ schlossen sich offenbar nicht aus, sondern konnten nebeneinander verwendet werden.*²³

²² Ahn 1992: 260. Cf. Walser 1972: 1; Starr 1975: 41; Walser 1984: 47ff.

²³ Ahn 1992: 260.

To sum up, it can be concluded that there is still substantial disagreement among scholars regarding the XPh date, whether it be a specific or approximative period. At least, according to the current state of things, it can now be said that a particular preference still exists for Herzfeld's first dating draft, even though all his four points are no longer supportable. The different conjunctures whose main dating assumptions revolve around Xerxes's European campaign are trying to somehow arrive at a biased conclusion at the expense of those elements that might as well deny them. It would seem as if those theories sought to force the finding from the written material under all circumstances. With such dating attempts—particularly Schmitt's—, we can observe a futile effort to assign the same prominence to the Greek-Persian conflict for both the Greek and Persian world view, which is the main hurdle in all dating attempts previously discussed. This biased methodology insinuates, to a great extent, that both Persians and Greeks had fought for the same reasons, namely their existence and freedom.

Furthermore, when considering other arguments for an early inscription date, such as the replacement or addenda to certain expressions ("the King" for "the Great King," or "me may Ahuramazda protect" for "me may Ahuramazda protect together with the gods"), a specific historical development in the royal title would indeed seem to become apparent—at least at first glance. In this case, it is even more challenging to determine whether the wording above indicated had been deliberately replaced or not. It could also be interpreted as a mistake committed by one of the scribes responsible for it or a merely indiscriminately word swap since both words and expressions shared the same semantic significance. We do not know this, and probably we will never know, although I agree mostly with Ahn's remarks. What can be modestly added is that this cuneiform Old Persian inscription does not offer any viable indication of precise dating, either before or after the campaign in Greece or by replacing certain linguistic expressions.

INFORMATION FROM THE INSCRIPTION

What kind of information is to be obtained from XPh? It is imperative to note herewith that any other information, be it theories or interpretations relating to the passages to be dealt with, need not be taken into consideration, at least in this part. In other words, it is appropriate to confine oneself exclusively to the textual report of XPh: what is the inscribed text trying to communicate? Only selected passages of the inscription will be included for this purpose, namely §5, 35–41; §4, 28–35; and §3, 13–28.²⁴ The fifth paragraph reads as follows:

35. (...) *utā antar aītā dahyāva āha, yad-*
 36. *ātaya paruvam **daivā** ayadiya. Pasāva va-*
 37. *šnā A.uramazdahā adam avam **daivadāna-***
 38. ***m** viyakanam utā patiyazbayam: “**daivā***
 39. *mā yadiyaiša;” yadāyadā paruvam **daivā***
 40. *ayadiya, avadā adam A.uramazdām ayada-*
 41. *i rtācā brazmaniya. (...)*

Lines 35–41: “And within these countries, there was (a place), where formerly the **daivas** were worshiped. Afterward, by the favor of Ahuramazda, I destroyed this **daiva shrine** und I proclaimed: ‘the **daivas** shalt not be worshiped (any longer)!’ Wheresoever formerly the **daivas** were worshiped, there I worshiped Ahuramazda at the right time and with the right ceremonial.”²⁵

This paragraph was chosen for mainly two reasons: firstly, it is the only section where the word *daivā*²⁶ is mentioned four times on the whole inscription. Secondly, there is no other mention of this word in the entire Achaemenid inscription corpus. The word *daivā* appears three times in the nominative case plural on lines 36, 38, and 39, and the word *daivadāna-*, a composite of the former,²⁷ occurs only once on line 37 in the accusative case singular.

²⁴ For the paragraph sequence used, see n. 8.

²⁵ All English translations were carried out by the author of the article.

²⁶ For further analysis of the word *daiva* and its Avestan equivalent, see below.

²⁷ The word *daivadāna-* is compounded by *daivā* and *dāna-*. The former stays usually untrans-

The following information emerges from this section: it is reported that within a single country or land (*dahyāva*), the undefined *daivas* have been worshiped. This nation cannot be otherwise singled out—at least so far. For unknown reasons, the Great King—in the first-person—saw himself obligated to destroy the *daiva* shrine, and in its place, the cult to Ahuramazda shall be imposed. From this point forward, the chastised country and its inhabitants must revere the new cult at the right time and with the right ceremonial (*ṛtācā brazmaniya*). Those are the only reliable statements to be obtained from this passage. Further information concerning the *daivas*' origin or the shrine's location seems to be impossible to infer.

However, if the first sentence of the fourth paragraph (*utā antar aiṭā dahyāva āha*) is once again surveyed, a reference to a country allegedly mentioned in a previous passage can be surely deduced. For this reason, it is now necessary to turn our attention towards the anterior passage to confirm whether such a nexus would indeed be manifest. The fourth paragraph reads as follows:

28. (...) *Θāti Xšā-*
29. *yaršā xšāyaθiya: yaθā taya adam x-*
30. *šāyaθiya abavam, asti antar aiṭā*
31. *dahyāva, tayai upari nipištā, a-*
32. *yauḍa. Pasāvamai A.uramazdahā upastām*
33. *abara, vašnā A.uramazdahā avām dahyāvam*
34. *adam ajanam utašim gāθavā nīšāda-*
35. *yam. (...)*

Lines 28–35: “Proclaims Xerxes, the King: When I became king, there is within these countries, which (are) inscribed above, (one which was) in turmoil. Afterward, Ahuramazda bore me aid; by the favor of Ahuramazda, I smote this country and put it (over) in its (proper) place.”

lated. The latter is generally translated as “vessel” (Kent 1950: 189), “Behälter, Bewahrungsort” (Brandenstein and Mayrhofer 1964: 114). Hence, this composite can be rendered into English as either “temple” or “shrine of the *daivas*” (Schmitt 2014: 163).

As proceeded prior, it is necessary to dissect the paragraph by sorting out the relevant information: there was an unnamed country that had been previously listed on the inscription and, for unknown reasons, had rebelled against Xerxes's authority. He was able to subdue this uprising successfully, and after this, the punished country was "put back in its right place" (*utašim gāθavā nīšādayam*). The measures taken and the implications of the last sentence cannot be lamentably further determined.

By considering this passage for the analysis of the previous one, it can be presumed that the "country in turmoil" (*dahyāuš ayauda*) is the one the devotion of the *daivas* was still alive against the king's will. This logic in the sequence of events described on XPh does not have to be as problematic as it would seem to be. The linguistic phrasing used for the uprising country is always introduced by the well-defined clause *antar aītā dahyāva* preceded or succeeded by a conjugated form of the Old Persian verb *ah*.²⁸

Admittedly, this fact has been mainly accepted within Iranian studies. It is rightly presumed that Xerxes, without wanting to provide further information upon the *daivas* events, intended to continue his speech of the fourth paragraph in the following section, as if both paragraphs were indeed outlining the incidents of the same country.²⁹ In doing so, a straightforward narrative continuum is well established. If one were to pursue and purposely carry on this logic, which is the most plausible interpretation, it would then, as it were, remain clear that the fourth and fifth sections must be closely connected to each other, providing us a more linear sequence of events and not separate incidents disjointed from each other.

Moreover, assuming that the rebellious country is one of the countries "inscribed above," it could be logically concluded that the mentioned country had already been referred to on Xerxes's single

²⁸ On the fifth paragraph, we encounter the word *āha*, in the third-person singular imperfect active. On the fourth paragraph, we stumble upon *asti*, in the third-person singular indicative active.

²⁹ Cf. Hartmann 1937: 158; Nyberg 1938: 366ff.; Levy 1939: 106ff.; Riminucci 2006: 186.

country list. On that ground and for the sake of our source's better understanding, it is essential to scrutinize the last paragraph to be investigated in this article, namely the country list (§3), to obtain a better view of the problem of the *daivas*. Xerxes's country list reads in the following way:

13. (...) *Θāti Xšāyaršā*
14. *xšāyaθiya: vašnā A.uramazdahā, imā*
15. *dahyāva, tayaīšām adam xšāyaθiya ā-*
16. *ham apataram hacā Pārsā; adamšām*
17. *patiyaxšayaī; manā bājim abaraha; ta-*
18. *yašām hacāma aθanhya, ava akunava;*
19. *dātam, taya manā, avadiš adāraya: Māda,*
20. *Ūja, Hara.uvatiš, Armina, Zranka, Parθava,*
21. *Haraīva, Bāxtriš, Sugda, Uvārazmiš,*
22. *Bābiruš, Aθurā, Θataguš, Sparda,*
23. *Mudrāya, Yaunā tayaī drayahyā dā-*
24. *rayanti utā tayaī paradraya dārayanti,*
25. *Maciyā, Arbāya, Gandāra, Hinduš,*
26. *Kaṭpatuka, Dahā, Sakā haumavargā, Sakā*
27. *tigraxaudā, Skudra, Ākaufaciya,*
28. *Putāyā, Krkā, Kūšiyā (...)*

Lines 13–28: “Proclaims Xerxes, the King: by the favor of Ahuramazda, these (are) the countries of which I was King outside of Persia; I governed over them, to me they bore tribute; which was arranged to them by me, they did that; the law which (is) mine, that held them firm: Media, Elam, Arachosia, Armenia, Drangiana, Parthia, Aria, Bactria, Sogdiana, Chorasmia, Babylonia, Assyria, Sattagydia, Lydia, Egypt, the Ionians who dwell in the sea and who dwell beyond the sea, the Makans, Arabia, Gandara, India, Cappadocia, the Dahae, the Amyrgian Scythians, the Scythians with pointed caps, Thrace, the Akaufakans, Libyans, Carians, (and) Nubians.”

Xerxes claimed to be the absolute ruler over all these countries. The country mentioned above is to be located where, initially, rose

against the Great King's authority. Following this logic, this would also be the same vassal country, in which a large part of the population still practiced the cult of the *daivas*. Whether this insurrection and the sanctions imposed after its pacification should be understood as events close in time is not ascertainable from the inscribed report.

If there is, at this point, still hesitation upon the narrative sequence logic, which would be entirely comprehensible, let me present one last remark to this respect. To further support the paragraph continuum thesis, we must bring up a very notorious fact that tended to be quite recurrent on closer inspection of Achaemenid history through the lens of Greek historiography. Accordingly, one of the best-known repressive measures against revolting and hostile populations were typically the destruction of temples and sanctuaries.³⁰ In this regard, one could very well assume that the Great King's primary motivation to destroy the *daiva* shrine or prescript its cult altogether seemed to have been motivated by political rather than religious reasons.

The following four Herodotean examples could accurately illustrate the repressive measures taken by Xerxes toward hostile populations, especially during the Greek campaign undertaken by the Persian empire, during which several Greek sanctuaries were either desecrated, plundered, or destroyed:

- VIII 32.2–33: looting and burning of temples in Phocis and the Apollo sanctuary in Abae

*[32] (2) But most of them (i.e., the Phocians) made their way out of the country to the Ozolian Locrians, where is the town of Amphissa above the Crisaeian plain. The foreigners overran the whole of Phocis, the Thessalians so guiding their army; and **all that came within their power they burnt and wasted, setting fire to towns and temples.** [33] Marching this way down the river Cephissus they ravaged all before them, burning the towns of Drymus, Charadra, Erochus, Tethronium, Amphicaea, Neon, Pediea, Tritea, Elatea, Hyampolis, Parapotamii, **and Abae, where was a richly endowed***

³⁰ Further on this point, see below.

*temple of Apollo, provided with wealth of treasure and offerings; and there was then as now a place of divination there. **This temple, too, they plundered and burnt;** and they pursued and caught some of the Phocians near the mountains, and did certain women to death by the multitude of their violators.*

- VIII 51.2–53: pillage and burning of the Athenian acropolis

*[51] (2) There they took the city, then left desolate; but they found in the temple some few Athenians, temple-stewards and needy men, who defended themselves against the assault by fencing the acropolis with doors and logs; these had not withdrawn to Salamis (...) [52] (1) The Persians sat down on the hill over against the acropolis, which is called by the Athenians the Hill of Ares, and besieged them by shooting arrows wrapped on lighted tow at the barricade (...) [53] (1) But at the last of the quandary the foreigners found an entrance; for the oracle must need be fulfilled, and all the mainland of Attica be made subject to the Persians. In front of the acropolis, there was a place where none was on guard and none would have thought that any man would ascend that way; here certain men mounted near the shrine of Cecrops' daughter Aglaurus, though the way led up a sheer cliff. (2) **When the Athenians saw that they had ascended to the acropolis, some of them cast themselves down from the wall and so perished, and others fled into the inner chamber. Those Persians who had come up first betook themselves to the gates, which they opened, and slew the suppliants; and when they had laid all the Athenians low, they plundered the temple and burnt the whole of the acropolis.***

- IX 13.1–2: Mardonius' destruction of Athens

[13] (1) So spoke the herald, and departed back again; and when Mardonius heard that, he was no longer desirous of remaining in Attica. Before he had word of it, he had held his hands, desiring to know the Athenians' plan and what they would do, and neither harmed nor harried the land of Attica, for he still ever supposed that they would make terms with him; (2) but when he could not move

*them, and learnt all the truth of the matter; he drew off from before Pausanias' army ere it entered the Isthmus; but first **he burnt Athens, and utterly overthrew and demolished whatever wall or house or temple was left standing** (...)*

- IX 65.2: burning of the temple of Demeter in Eleusis

*[65] (2) And herein is a marvelous thing, that though the battle (i.e., Plataea) was hard by the grove of Demeter there was no sign that any Persian had been slain in the precinct, or entered into it; most of them fell near the temple in unconsecrated ground; and I judge—if it be not a sin to judge of the ways of heavens—that **the goddess herself denied them entry, for that they had burnt her temple, the shrine at Eleusis.***

Although this might have the appearance of a *modus operandi* attributed exclusively to Xerxes, this procedure against adverse population antecedes and transcends Xerxes's behavior. A similar reaction both of Darius towards Greek temples and Cambyeses to Egyptian temples can also be found in Herodotus himself: the burning of the sanctuary of Apollo at Didyma during the Ionian Revolt (VI 18–19), the destruction of Ionian cities like Chios, Lesbos and Tenedos and the desecration of their sanctuaries (VI 31–33); several times in the context of Egyptian conquest, where various sanctuaries and cult sites were allegedly desecrated and destroyed either by Cambyeses's order or, at least, with his permission (Hdt. III 16, 25–26, 28–30, 33).³¹ There are numerous instances in Greek historiography which, apart from their tendentious and arbitrary nature, can in great detail attest this point of view, namely the Persian *modus operandi* towards sanctuaries of rebellious populations, which among other things, have much helped to establish the image of the Persian kings as hybrid oriental despots in the Greek collective memory.

³¹ The cases given here are not about their truthfulness, but rather serve to demonstrate how Greek historiography (cf. Diod. I 46; Strab. XVII 1, 27) had pictured the Achaemenid behavior

Nevertheless, let us go back to the main argument exposed above: based on the examples given and supported by written sources, it would seem to be entirely plausible to assume that the country the *daivas* were worshipped in (§5) was the same country that was most likely in turmoil for unknown reasons at the beginning of Xerxes's reign (§4). As a result, Xerxes, after taking the corresponding repression measures, ordered the destruction of an arguably prominent sanctuary within this country as punishment for its insubordination—not only against the ideal imperial order but also against the Great King's authority. The cult to Ahuramazda was instated offhand instead of the demolished *daiva* shrine.

All these measures taken by the Great King, as far as we restrict ourselves to the analysis of XPh, seem to have been mainly of political and not religious nature.³² With the help of the information gained out of the narrative structure of XPh, it can be stated that both the country list and the fourth section can prove to be an introduction to the *daiva* report. Therefore, this would mean that, after coming under Persian power, an unnamed province rose against the empire right after Xerxes becoming king, and that the same upraised province, after its "pacification," was punished through the destruction of one of their sanctuaries, by name *daivadana*.

However, one last question remains open, which is the biggest puzzle of XPh: with all the information we have gained so far, would it be possible to locate the revolting and then punished country by name mentioned on XPh? If it were possible to locate this country, then it

towards certain situations, especially warlike ones (cf. Harrison 2004; Chiasson 2012). On the arbitrary nature of Greek sources, particularly Herodotus recount on Cambyses and his Egyptian expedition, Posener 1936: 1–26, 164–175; Kienitz 1953: 57ff.; Klotz 2015: 3–4; Agut-Labordère 2016; Irwin 2017.

³² I agree, to a certain extent, that orientalist also see strictly political reasons behind the measures against the *daivas* (cf. Nyberg 1938: 366ff.; Boyce 1982: 174–175). Nevertheless, one must sharply diverge from their interpretation, according to which the overall course of the *daiva* event results from Xerxes's Zoroastrian devotion. For instance, Boyce's consideration of XPh ultimately leads to a religious interpretation, primarily because of the terminological similarity between the Achaemenid language on XPh and the meaning of the Avestan word *daeva* (see below).

would be possible in the same way to locate the *daiva* land. However, this is not an easy undertaking, especially since many scholars had already tried to do so in the context of both Iranian studies and Greek history unsuccessfully, in most cases. The upcoming part of this paper is dedicated to analyzing such attempts, which have led to theories still worthy of discussion.

THEORIES AND INTERPRETATIVE MODELS

In the academic literature, there are four main theories on the XPh account, which, on the one hand, have enjoyed high acceptance and, on the other hand, were the starting point for great discussions. The first three theories touch upon the historical framework of the report detailed on XPh, the country the *daivas* would have been worshipped in, and the possible origin of the *daivas* site. However, the fourth theory does not deal with any given historical framework but rather with the nature of the inscription(s) itself. According to this theory, the inscription is not an ordinary source material whose content can be placed in a particular historical context. It is instead an unusual text—like the majority of Achaemenid inscriptions—whose primary function was to proclaim royal ideology. So, without any further ado, I would like to present these theories and let us see whether they can still be regarded as possible hypotheses for the great XPh mystery.

The Destruction of the Esagila at Babylon (or Egyptian Temples?)

A few years after Xerxes became king, uprisings broke out in two central Persian provinces, the course of which older scholars tried to link with the XPh country:

- During Darius's last years, an uprising broke out in Egypt³³

³³ Herodotus (VIII 7) describes the Egyptian revolt only casually in the context of Darius's new war arrangements against the Greeks, which had to be continued by Xerxes. The only thing that can be gathered from the Herodotean passage concerning this uprising is that “ὥς δὲ

under the leadership of a certain Khabasha,³⁴ in which the newly appointed king's troops managed to successfully put down a more than two-year revolt after bloody encounters. However, it remains utterly unknown whether Persian troops had carried out temple disturbances during this revolt.³⁵ Due to the apparent conservation of Egyptian temples, Egypt must be excluded as a reference point for XPh.³⁶

- At about the same time, two successive uprisings broke out at Babylon.³⁷ The first one, which according to Babylonian sources, should not have lasted long, took place in 484 (June or July) under the leadership of a certain Bēl-šimanni. Xerxes succeeded in ultimately defeating the revolt within a couple of days.³⁸ A second, longer, and more dangerous uprising broke out two years after (August 482) under the leadership of a certain Šamaš-eriba. During this revolt, the rebels succeeded in

ἀνεγνώσθη Ξέρξης στρατεύεσθαι ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα, ἐνθαῦτα δευτέρῳ μὲν ἔτει μετὰ τὸν θάνατον τὸν Δαρείου πρῶτα στρατηγὴν ποιέεται ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀπεστεῶτας. τούτους μὲν νυν καταστρεψάμενος καὶ Αἴγυπτον πᾶσαν πολλὸν δουλοτέρην ποιήσας ἢ ἐπὶ Δαρείου ἦν, ἐπιτράπει Ἀχαιμένει ἀδελφεῷ μὲν ἑωυτοῦ, Δαρείου δὲ παιδί.”

³⁴ Cf. Budge 1902: 72–74; Stern 1984: 71. Whether this leader could be identified as Pharaoh Psammetichus IV is not clear (cf. Cruz-Urbe 1980).

³⁵ Cf. Budge 1902: 70–74; Levy 1939: 109; Ahn 1992: 113.

³⁶ Similarly, it is entirely unknown whether a cult to Ahuramazda founded by Xerxes was established after this revolt. The Egyptian “hypothesis,” if it might be called so, first appeared in Hignett 1963: 89 (n. 5) as a small response to Olmstead’s Bactrian hypothesis (see below). Nevertheless, it is, first and foremost, regrettable that Hignett did not provide any arguments at all to defend his hypothesis.

³⁷ For the dating of the Babylonian uprisings, Cameron 1941: 319–325; Parker and Dubberstein 1956: 15; Böhl 1962: 111–113; Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1987: 70; whereby both Cameron and Parker and Dubberstein erroneously placed the two uprisings in the year 482. The corresponding correction of this dating was then made by Böhl’s article and is mostly accepted in the academic literature (Ghirshman 1976: 4; Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1987: 70; Ahn 1992: 113; Dandamayev 2000: 329; Riminucci 2006: 187ff). In my opinion, it is worthwhile at this point to make a small remark on the chronological classification: Although there is a predominantly sizeable academic consensus for the revolts’ years, it still seems to be extremely peculiar that according to Briant’s opinion, these revolts would have taken place in the years 481 for the one of Bēl-šimanni and 479 for that of Šamaš-eriba (Briant 2002: 525, 535, 544).

³⁸ Böhl 1962: 111–113; Dandamayev 2000: 329.

reconquering important cities, including Borsippa, Dilbat, and Babylon³⁹ (just as in the first uprising) and murdering Zopyrus, the satrap of Babylon. After the riot was subdued, two separate satrapies for the districts of Babylon and Abar Nahara were installed.⁴⁰

Then, in this context, it was widely accepted by several renamed scholars,⁴¹ based exclusively on the evidence of Greek authors, that the statue of Bel-Marduk was removed from the Esagila, that the Marduk priest was murdered by trying to prevent the Great King from confiscating the statue, and that Babylonian temples, especially that of Bel-Marduk, was destroyed.⁴² Among the ancient authors used to support this hypothesis are Herodotus, Strabo and Arrian, of whom the latter two wrote about the destruction of the temple. Herodotus, on the other hand, reports only on a statue confiscation from the Esagila, considered as the Bel-Marduk statue, and the murder of the Marduk priest given his indisposition to meet Xerxes's requirements. It is worth mentioning that all three Greek authors, strangely enough, did not describe any uprising in Babylon. However, a single mention in Greek literature of one of the two Babylonian uprisings⁴³

³⁹ Böhl 1962: 111–113; Dandamayev 2000: 329.

⁴⁰ Cf. Stern 1984: 73, 78ff.; with further literature, Klinkott 2005: 74.

⁴¹ Hartmann 1937: 158–159; Nyberg 1938: 365ff.; Ghirshman 1954: 190–191; Böhl 1962: 113; Duschesne-Guillemain 1962: 156ff.; Widengren 1965: 138ff.; Mayrhofer 1969: 162–163; Herrenschmidt 1980: 326ff.; Dandamayev 2000: 329. Although Olmstead 1948: 237; Boyce 1982: 164; Boyce 1984: 293 agree with the theory in some aspects (Xerxes had the statue of Marduk removed, the Marduk priest murdered and the Esagila destroyed), they plead for other interpretations of XPh.

⁴² For older scholars, this was precisely the point from which Xerxes, a religiously strict ruler, would have renounced the religious tolerance policy traditionally practiced by his predecessors and who would begin to be regarded as a hybrid ruler, which, as Ahn 1992: 117ff. has long remarked in detail, corresponds to a picture outlined by Herodotus of the Persian rulers as hybrid oriental despots. Those scholars who argued for Babylonian theory as the historical reference point for XPh also defended the view that Xerxes was a Zoroastrian fundamentalist and has set a limit to an epoch characterized by religious tolerance.

⁴³ It seems that the Babylonian uprising described by Ctesias was that of Šamaš-eriba due to its relevancy and impact, rather than the first one, and also since Zopyrus' assassination was described.

and the assassination of Zopyrus is known in extracts thanks to Ctesias of Cnidos,⁴⁴ handed down by Photius I, Patriarch of Constantinople. At this point, it is necessary to analyze how these sources depicted the Babylonian incident and, given the case, to provide a new interpretation for them.⁴⁵

● Hdt. I 183:

[183] (1) ἔστι δὲ τοῦ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι ἱεροῦ καὶ ἄλλος κάτω νηός, ἐνθα ἄγαλμα μέγα τοῦ Διὸς ἐνὶ κατήμενον χρύσειον, (...) (2) ἔξω δὲ τοῦ νηοῦ βωμός ἐστι χρύσεος, ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλος βωμός μέγας, ἐπ' οὗ θύεται τὰ τέλεα τῶν προβάτων (...) ἦν δὲ ἐν τῷ τεμένει τούτῳ ἔτι τὸν χρόνον ἐκεῖνον καὶ ἀνδριάς δυνάδεκα πηχέων χρύσεος στερεός: (3) ἐγὼ μὲν μιν οὐκ εἶδον, τὰ δὲ λέγεται ὑπὸ Χαλδαίων, ταῦτα λέγω. **τούτῳ τῷ ἀνδριάντι** Δαρεῖος μὲν ὁ Ὑστάσπεος ἐπιβουλεύσας οὐκ ἐτόλμησε λαβεῖν, **Ξέρξης** δὲ ὁ Δαρείου **ἔλαβε καὶ τὸν ἱερά ἀπέκτεινε ἀπαγορεύοντα μὴ κινεῖν τὸν ἀνδριάντα** (...)

[183] In the Babylonian temple there is another shrine below, where is a great golden **image of Zeus** (i.e., of Bel-Marduk), sitting at a great golden table (...) (2) Outside the temple is a golden altar. There is also another great altar, on which are sacrificed the full-grown of the flocks (...) and in the days of Cyrus there was still in this sacred demesne a **statue** of solid gold twelve cubits high. (3) I myself have not seen it, but I tell what is told by the Chaldeans. Darius son of Hystaspes purposed to take **this statue** but dared not; **Xerxes** his son **took it, and slew the priest who warned him not to move the statue.**

⁴⁴ Ctes. Pers. VII–XXIII 26 (= FGrHist 688 F 13a 26): “Ἐξελαύνει Ξέρξης εἰς Ἑκβάτανα, καὶ ἀγγέλλεται αὐτῷ ἀπόστασις Βαβυλωνίων καὶ Ζωπύρου τοῦ στρατηγοῦ αὐτῶν ὑπὸ σφῶν ἀναίρεσις.”

⁴⁵ For this matter, it is relevant for the revaluation of this theory to only assess Herodotus in original Greek.

- Strab. XVI 1, 5

[1] (5) (...) Here too is **the tomb of Belus** (i.e., Bel-Marduk), now in ruins (**having been demolished by Xerxes, as it is said**) (...)

- Arr. *Anab.* III 16, 4

[16] (4) On entering Babylon, Alexander directed the Babylonians to rebuild **the temples Xerxes destroyed**, and especially the **temple of Baal**, whom the Babylonians honor more than any other god (...)

- Arr. *Anab.* VII 17, 1–2

[17] (1) **The temple of Belus** was in the center of the city of Babylon (...); (2) Like the other shrines of Babylon, **Xerxes had razed it to the ground** when he returned from Greece.⁴⁶

By considering these factors, it could then seem logical to assume that the Great King did indeed take repressive measures to the detriment of the rebels, by destroying their temples, as a result of two successive uprisings occurring at a quite inopportune time,⁴⁷ requiring large troop logistics and having been bloodily suppressed. Similarly, it must also be considered that the expulsion of cults and destruction of temples never happened without any reason, primarily since it occurred as a result of a punctual crisis within the empire that tended to develop into warlike events.⁴⁸

Accordingly, this response, which may have involved the expulsion of cults, should not be regarded as an arbitrary or unjustified act of religious intolerance, but rather as Xerxes's overarching intervention,

⁴⁶ This passage is highly fascinating and equally controversial since it is the only source in which Xerxes's repressive measures against the Babylonian uprising after the Hellas campaign were dated. It must also be admitted that the three previous sources do not offer any precise data for the royal reprisals. However, due to the Babylonian theory's untenability (see below), it will not be appropriate to pursue this problem.

⁴⁷ The initial situation was indeed very unfavorable for Xerxes because, based on Ctesias report (see n. 44) and the reconstruction of the events offered here, this was the period in which the Great King was dedicated to preparations for war against Greece.

⁴⁸ Cf. Firpo 1986: 331–333, 361–374.

whose authority was granted, according to XPh, by Ahuramazda and whose main task as king was to restore the imperial and world order distorted by revolts.⁴⁹ However, as long as it seemed more conducive to the Persian court, the Great King allowed the revolting people to maintain all those domestic and even religious customs after suppressing any rebellion.⁵⁰ Despite all that was already established, it is highly doubtful that Xerxes destroyed the main Babylonian temple—the Esagila—as punishment for the uprisings, murdered the local chief priest, and either destroyed or removed the statue of Bel-Marduk.

The turning point, thanks to which this theory was finally refuted, came along with an article published by A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White in 1987, in which it was convincingly demonstrated, through a new and fruitful Herodotus reading, that the statue taken away by Xerxes was not that of Bel-Marduk, but another statue whose name remains unknown.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Cf. Riminucci 2006: 188–189; Abdi 2007: 55ff. This remark necessarily goes hand in hand with the Persian worldview, and although this is a topic regularly brought to the forefront of the discussion on the Achaemenid religion, it will not be possible to pursue it in detail here. Nevertheless, the language of XPh shows several similarities with that of Avesta (see below). Another yet uncommented similarity between both is the fact that this inscription, especially on the fifth section, has an Avestan dualistic-antagonistic terminology, which could well primarily be understood as a malignancy (an undesired cult) to be eliminated from the world and the restoration competence of the imperial and world order given by Ahuramazda (the destruction of such undesired worship and, instead, the establishment of the real cult). In other words, the Avestan term *arta-* is related to both the destruction of the *daiva* site and the establishment of the cult of Ahuramazda and the term *daiva* is intricately linked to *drug-* and *dregvant-*, terms with a religious devaluing meaning (cf. Ahn 1992: 108ff).

⁵⁰ Cf. Riminucci 2006: 189ff. Likewise, this is the transcendental point to understand the logic behind the temple destruction policy carried out by Xerxes and all Persian rulers. This policy is not an arbitrary punishment measure to all rebels throughout every corner of the Persian empire and corresponds somewhat to those circumstances in which the rebellious populations find themselves in relation to the imperial power.

⁵¹ The Babylonian theory's main argument was based exclusively on Herodotus report and the assumption that had arisen for several years from the incorrect reading of his passage. If it is confirmed that Xerxes took another statue from the Esagila and not that of Bel-Marduk, the Babylonian theory consequently collapses. Similarly, it should be emphasized that other sources, be it Strabo or Arrian, only served to confirm the Herodotean passage (cf. How and Wells I 1936: 142–143; Asheri *et al.* 2007: 202–203).

The beginning of the paragraph and the tense change are critical for understanding what Herodotus is trying to put into words. He starts by describing in the present tense (ἔστι δὲ τοῦ) that there is a second temple in the sanctuary at Babylon, where a great ἄγαλμα of Zeus can be seen. The Greek word ἄγαλμα should be comprehended as a statue in honor of a god that, in most cases, has cultic functions.⁵² After this explanation, Herodotus carries on to describe two altars outside this temple (ἔξω δὲ τοῦ νηοῦ βωμός ἐστι χρύσεος, ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλος βωμός μέγας). The opposition of both existing altars becomes apparent with the enumerative/explanatory particle δὲ. Then, what is crucial for the following sentences, he changes to the imperfect tense followed by an adversative δὲ to point out the former presence—in the same precinct—of another solid gold statue depicted as ἀνδριὰς. Herodotus emphasizes that ἐγὼ μὲν μιν οὐκ εἶδον in relation to the recently named ἀνδριὰς understood as an image of a man or merely as a statue.⁵³

The logical implication of this description and the wording of the whole passage so far is that this ἄγαλμα is still *in situ*. Following this assumption, Darius wanted to take the ἀνδριὰς, not the ἄγαλμα, but did not dare to do so. However, Xerxes manages to confiscate the statue from the holy district known as ἀνδριὰς and, yet again, not the ἄγαλμα. If one were to accept this hypothesis and follow Kuhrt's and Sherwin-White's conclusions,⁵⁴ it would be impossible that XPh would directly refer to the suppression of the Babylonian revolt of the year 482 and the destruction of the Bel-Marduk temple. The *daivas* thematized on the inscription should not relate to any Babylonian deities.

Even if it were to be assumed that Xerxes had murdered the Marduk priest and destroyed this statue, it would have had the immediate consequence such as the Babylonians, according to the traditional laws, would no longer have been able to recognize the Achaemenids as legitimate rulers, which in turn was never attempted after the revolts.⁵⁵

⁵² Cf. LSJ s. v. ἄγαλμα; cf. Nock 1930: 3ff.

⁵³ Cf. LSJ s. v. ἀνδριὰς.

⁵⁴ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1987: 78.

⁵⁵ Cf. Ahn 1992: 114; Dandamayev 2000: 329.

This would have happened since the Babylon chief priest was the only person responsible for carrying out the royal investiture and providing the king with his royal powers. Moreover, assuming the chief priest's assassination and the removal of the statue of Marduk were carried out by Xerxes, we must inevitably consider lines 39–41 of XPh:

39. (...) *yadāyadā paruvam **daivā***
 40. *ayadiya, avadā adam A.uramazdām ayada-*
 41. *ī rtācā brazmaniya. (...)*
39. Wheresoever, formerly **the daivas**
 40. were worshiped, there I worshiped Ahuramazda
 41. at the right time and with the right ceremonial.

There is no written, let alone archeological evidence that tells us about a cultic organization to Ahuramazda at Babylon. Quite the contrary, Marduk priests and the indigenous population did continue their cultic traditions, either at or near Babylon, without any hindrance.⁵⁶ One last consideration provided by R. Frye contributes to the definitive refutation of the Babylonian hypothesis by assuming, rightly so, that a general polemic against Marduk would inevitably have led to an extension to other Babylonian and non-Zoroastrian deities in other regions of the empire, or at least in southern Mesopotamia. However, this was not the case here.⁵⁷

The Destruction of the Athenian Acropolis

The idea of conciliating XPh with the Greeks, and especially with Athens, sounds indeed quite enticing to not, at the very least, try to pursue it. I. Lévy published in 1939 an article titled "*L'inscription triomphale de Xerxès*." In this paper, he outlined a new theoretical framework for XPh and the *daiva* problem. By doing so, he criticized both Babylonian and Iranian theories and proposed this theory as a possible

⁵⁶ Cf. Boyce 1982: 174–175; Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1987: 78; Riminucci 2006: 189.

⁵⁷ Frye 1984: 174: "(...) and if Xerxes had meant only Babylon he would have said so, or if the daivas included Marduk then they should also have included Humban, and perhaps mountains and rivers near Persepolis."

solution.⁵⁸ This model focuses not only on the *daiva* report but also pays some special attention to one particular sentence found in the country list:

23. (...) *Yaunā tayai drayahyā dā-*

24. *rayanti utā tayai paradraya dārayanti* (...) ⁵⁹

23. (...) the Ionians who dwell in the sea

24. and who dwell beyond the sea (...)

According to Lévy, XPh deals with the burning of the Athenian acropolis during the Greek campaign of 479 BC (Hdt. VIII 51.2–53, see above). Thus, there were no rebellions to be eliminated broken out from within the empire, but instead, the war against the Ionians living across the sea (*Yaunā tayai drayahyā*) had been the only reason for Xerxes behind XPh, provided it was carved a few years later after the battles at Plataea and Salamis. In distinct contrast to Herzfeld's considerations, these battles, the entire war, and its overall course did not influence the XPh.⁶⁰ Lévy's further argumentation is based almost exclusively upon his Herodotus reading:

*Dès lors, le problème est résolu. Tous les indices convergent sur Athènes, que Xerxès pouvait traiter de tributaire indocile, car elle avait rejeté les Pisistratides, fœux du roi. Elle fut, suivant la tradition grecque que tout confirme, l'objet principal de la haine de l'Achéménide. En représailles du sacrilège que les Athéniens avaient commis à Sardes en brulant les bois sacrés et les temples, il ne s'arrêtera pas avant d'avoir pris et incendié Athènes. Il prépare longuement une guerre de revanche qui est une guerre sainte: la ville conquise, il incendie l'Acropole et ses temples—le daivadana.*⁶¹

⁵⁸ On the Iranian theory, see below.

⁵⁹ Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2001: 323 has rightly observed that the denomination *Yaunā*, which does not have any pejorative connotation at all, was used in Near Eastern sources (Assyrian, Hebrew, and Persian) and covers in most cases all Greeks in a nonspecific way (cf. Brinkman 1989; Rollinger 1997; Rollinger and Henkelman 2009).

⁶⁰ Lévy 1939: 118. Clearly, he is polemizing with Herzfeld's first dating attempt (see above).

⁶¹ Lévy 1939: 120. A couple of interesting points must be addressed in this quotation: Firstly, as already noted by Ahn (see above), one can observe an evident Herodotean influence in

Lévy is equally aware of what is written in VIII 54 concerning Xerxes's appeal to the Athenian refugees. Instead, he arbitrarily chooses to ignore and discredit it, arguing that this particular Herodotean survey should be no longer taken into account.⁶² Apart from such arbitrary elements, he argued, it is quite explicit that the Great King's appeal to sacrifice refers to a god left unnamed by Herodotus, namely Ahuramazda. Moreover, as described in the first book, the refugees' ritual actions undoubtedly correspond to Persian religious customs, in which it is not prevalent to "*erect images of gods, temples and altars (...) They used to sacrifice to Zeus (i.e., Ahuramazda) on the mountain peaks.*"⁶³

One of the most problematic parts of this theory is precisely considering all Greece as the land in which the royal repressive measures towards the *daivas* are said to have taken place. For if, on the one hand, we may look at how this theory has been welcomed in the contemporary academic literature, we can distinctly state that it has had neither a positive nor a negative impact on the further academic debate. On the other hand, following Lévy's logic in the narrower sense and taking yet again the country list into consideration, it shows those countries the Great King claimed to rule over. Remarkable—and indeed sometimes misleading—, lines 23 and 24 present two groups of Ionians or, better, Greeks: those dwelling in the sea or on the coast and beyond the sea. By declaring this, it is rather doubtful that the Great King—regarding the *Yaunā* living beyond the sea—would claim to

Lévy's statement, especially since he takes over Herodotus' point of view regarding the origin of the war almost literally. Secondly, it is quite fascinating how this almost inevitably idea of Xerxes as a religious fundamentalist with hints of an Eastern despot arises (cf. Young 1980: 239; Koch 1996: 138). Xerxes, as such, was preparing a holy war because of Athens' sacrilegious actions in Sardes. This presumption cannot be testified to in any available source known. And finally, the assumption that the acropolis and the temples on it (emphasis in the plural) represented the seize and destruction of the *daivadāna* (focus on the singular form, see above) raises several queries not easy to be answered.

⁶² Lévy 1939: 120 (n. 4): "Hérodote se demande si Xerxès n'a pas agi sur l'ordre d'un songe ou sous l'influence des remords."

⁶³ Hdt. I 131, 1: "Πέρσας δὲ οἶδα νόμοισι τοιοῖσιδε χρεωμένους, ἀγάλματα μὲν καὶ νηοὺς καὶ βωμοὺς οὐκ ἐν νόμῳ ποιευμένους ἰδρῦεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖσι ποιεῦσι μωρίην ἐπιφέρουσι, ὥς μὲν ἐμοὶ δοκέειν, ὅτι οὐκ ἀνθρωποφύεας ἐνόμισαν τοὺς θεοὺς κατὰ περ οἱ Ἕλληνες εἶναι."

govern over the whole of Greece, especially since the wording found on Darius's and Xerxes's inscriptions most likely refer to the inhabitants of the coastal towns of Asia Minor (*Yaunā tayai drayahyā* = Hellespontine Phrygia)⁶⁴ and the inhabitants of the Aegean islands (*Yaunā tayai paradraya* = Hellespontine Thracia).⁶⁵ In other words, under Darius and Xerxes, there would be an actual claim to rule over the Greek islands and cities in Asia Minor and not over Greece.

The political relationship among the Persian empire, the Ionian islands and cities of Asia Minor could be confirmed by comparing another Achaemenid monument. On the country list of the base relief of a Darius statue discovered in Susa,⁶⁶ we can observe the 24 countries claimed to be Persian subjects.⁶⁷ A noteworthy fact is that the Ionians are neither mentioned nor represented anywhere. There are two schools of thought around this conundrum. The one defends that this could be understood due to the fact that this country list, precisely like every Achaemenid inscription, would not be attributed any historical character since the country lists and every other detail within all Old Persian inscriptions tend instead to communicate royal ideology and not historical events.⁶⁸ The other argues that the omission of the Ionians could

⁶⁴ Cf. DPe §2, 14; DSe §4, 27. See n. 20.

⁶⁵ Cf. DPe §2, 15; DSe §4, 29. With this assumption, it is not only possible to completely stripe this theory out of its theoretical framework, but also Herzfeld's both XPh dating attempts (see above), according to which the *Yaunā tayai drayahyā* referred exclusively to the inhabitants of Cyprus, the *Yaunā tayai paradraya* referred to the *Yaunā takabarā* only testified in DNa §3, 29 and A³Pb 26, and to the Ionians in Asia Minor (according to him *Yaunā tayai uškahyā*, such as in DPe §2, 13).

⁶⁶ The Darius statue discovered in Susa at Christmas 1972 can be surely dated to the last third of Darius's reign (498–492 BC). Cf. Trichet and Poupet 1974: 59; Hinz 1975: 115ff.

⁶⁷ On the left and right side of the base relief, there is a very impressive country list drafted in hieroglyphics and decorated with two times twelve figures which visually represents 24 subject nations. The visual element of the depicted subject nation reminds to DB, DPe, DNa and DSe. The subjected countries are listed in the following order: Persia, Media, Elam, Aria, Parthia, Bactria, Sogdia, Arachosia, Drangiana, Sattagydia, Chorasmia, the Scythians beyond the sea (on the left side); Babylonia, Armenia, Lydia, Cappadocia, Thracia, Assyria, Hegra (= Arabia), Egypt, Libya, Nubia, Maka, India (on the left side). Cf. Root 1979: 61–68; Calmeyer 1991; Klinkott 2005: 73.

⁶⁸ Further to this point, see below.

be very well placed into a precise historical context and represents real political changes within the Persian empire. Whereas the first point will be addressed eventually in this same paper, the second point should be given more attention. Firstly, we have to assume that the omission of the *Yaunas* depends upon neither a change in the empire's foreign policy⁶⁹ nor a deliberate error or lack of Egypt's political interest in Greece.⁷⁰ The concealment of the *Yaunas* in this relief—inevitably dated to 498–495—corresponds to the historical development during the Ionian Revolt (*ca.* 500–494 BC).⁷¹ The data is too clear to be regarded as a mere coincidence. After the suppression of the Ionian Revolt, Xerxes did not doubt to mention the *Yaunas* on the country list again. Moreover, merely because this would reflect the Great King's actual claim to power.⁷²

This small observation shows the weak basis this theory lies on. Besides, as already pointed out, the *Yaunas* would have to refer to the Greeks of Asia Minor (*tayai drayahyā*)—not to the Greek mainland—and to the Aegean islands' inhabitants (*tayai paradraya*). What can also help to refute this hypothesis finally is XPh statement from line 39 onwards, which was either wrongly or biasedly interpreted. In those lines, it is reported, as the conclusion of the measures taken against the *daiva* site, an Ahuramazda cult was founded. In contrast to Lévy, it seems to be necessary at this point to rely on the Herodotean report (Hdt. VIII 54):

(...) On the next day after the messenger was sent, he (i.e., Xerxes) called together the Athenians exiles who followed in this train, and bade them go up to the acropolis and offer sacrifices after their manner, whether it was some vision seen of him in sleep that led him to give this charge, or that he repented of his burning of the temple. The Athenian exiles did as they were bidden.

⁶⁹ Roaf 1974: 127 argues that there are a considerable course change and a lack of interest in Persian foreign policy towards the *Yaunas* and other unmentioned populations.

⁷⁰ Cf. Calmeyer 1983: 166.

⁷¹ Cf. Walser 1984: 27ff.

⁷² Cf. Walser 1984: 27ff.

According to Herodotus, the Great King did not establish a cult dedicated to Ahuramazda on the acropolis. Quite the opposite, since he ordered the Athenian refugees first to climb the acropolis and to sacrifice according to their autochthonous customs, and not according to Persian fashion.⁷³ As a result, it can be confirmed that the Athenian hypothesis does not correspond to the XPh report.

Repressive Measures Against non-Zoroastrian Cults (a.k.a. the Iranian Theories)

In contrast to the hypotheses discussed previously, the next group of theories does not gravitate primarily around the question of the *daiva* shrine location but rather around those deities possibly associated with the term *daiva*. As already demonstrated, the *daivas* must be identified with neither Babylonian nor Egyptians nor Greek subjects.

There have been several versions of this theory,⁷⁴ but the first version was put forward by Herzfeld.⁷⁵ In his opinion, it would not have been possible that foreign deities were called *daivas*. The Iranian denomination *baga* was used only to identify foreign gods, as established in BD §62 and §63 (*A.uramazdā[mai] upastām abara utā aniyāha bagāha, tayaī hanti*).⁷⁶ The nation meant in XPh, Herzfeld continues, is not only Media but also Elam, places where gods like Mithra, Anahita, and Vrθragna—the *daivas* themselves—had always been worshiped, and their cults predated the prophet himself, Zarathustra. Although the introduction of a monotheistic *Staatsreligion* may have taken place during Darius's reign, he presented himself as a tolerant person towards older cults and mainly towards popular gods within the Persian priesthood. The *status quo* was so maintained. However, when Xerxes succeeded him, the religious tolerance policies

⁷³ Cf. Macan 1908: 441; How and Wells 1933: 253.

⁷⁴ Cf. Olmstead 1948; Dandamayev 1976; Ghirshman 1976; Bianchi 1977; Boyce 1982; Frye 1984.

⁷⁵ Herzfeld 1937: 70ff.

⁷⁶ Herzfeld 1937: 70ff.; Herzfeld 1938: 105ff.

were suppressed altogether. Holding a leading position within the Persian elite, the Median Magi felt compelled to revolt against this new order since their position started to be threatened.⁷⁷ The introduction of a new *Staatsreligion* and, even more so, the policies put forward by Xerxes accompanied the final disparagement of the *daivas*. This inner-Iranian religious conflict was the historical reference point of XPh.

In this theory, compelling points can be identified, but even more, much-complicated questions arise with it. First of all, onto the more remarkable details: the interpretation is restricted to a religious setting, under the presumption of Xerxes's and Darius's Zoroastrian faith. Moved by his profound beliefs, Xerxes had tried to impose his religion under all circumstances. The intentional concealment of the insurgent province(s) on XPh should be understood in two ways. Firstly, it was entirely apparent to all Persian subjects that XPh was directly referring to Media and Elam. Secondly, this concealment should be understood as Xerxes's irredeemable failure.⁷⁸

The most problematic elements of this theory have to be addressed: the statement by which the word *baga* corresponds only to foreign deities is wrong. This position is nowadays widely regarded as disproved only by the simple fact that *baga* is extensively used in the Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions to refer to Ahuramazda itself.⁷⁹ The issue regarding the Iranian origin of the *daivas* will be discussed below and, therefore, will not be tackled here. That the *daiva* country is identified with either Media or Elam (or even both) is purely conjectural, with no tangible evidence to back it up—and this statement concerns not only Herzfeld but others still defending this opinion. The third point

⁷⁷ Cf. Mayrhofer 1969; Ahn 1992: 131ff.; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2001: 334; Abdi 2007: 55ff.

⁷⁸ Cf. Abdi 2007: 69ff.

⁷⁹ Sims-Williams 2000: 404 asserts that, although *baga* can only be documented in a few passages in the *Gāthās* and Young(er) Avesta, this word underwent a substantial change on a semantic level in Old Persian, in which it can be translated as "god:" "(The word *baga*-) is the only generic term for the divinities worshipped by the Achaemenids." Cf. Brandenstein and Mayrhofer 1964: 109ff.; Schmitt 2014: 149. Evidence for *baga* used as a common word to identify Ahuramazda can be found in AmHa, AsHa, DEa, DNa, DNb, DSe, DSf, DSt, DSab, DZc, XEa, XPa, XPb, XPc, XPd, XPf, XPh, XPl, XVa, D²Ha, A²Hc, A³Pa (*baga vazrka A. uramazdā*) und in AsHa, DHa, DPb, DPh, DSf, XEa, XVa, A²Hc (*maθišta bagānām*).

is as well very speculative and quite problematic in itself, mainly because it presupposed too many abstruse matters regarding Zarathustra's lifetime and alleged intervention in Darius's rise to power. Given the complexity of such a topic and the overwhelmingly academic consent about it nowadays, the only thing it can be affirmed is that this postulate should be regarded as indefensible.⁸⁰

Another point of consideration is the semantic similarities found in the Avesta and XPh. The Avestan term *daeua* and the one found in XPh contain a negative literal sense of this word, understood as either "false gods" or "idols."⁸¹ For that reason, Herzfeld concluded that both Achaemenid kings were followers of Zoroastrianism, the father being not as radicalized as the son. M. Boyce does not add anything new regarding both kings' faith. Nevertheless, she tries to be more cautious by interpreting the inscription, especially since, in her opinion, the location of the *daiva* country remains still open.⁸² So, like Herzfeld, she also appeals to the stated semantic resemblances.⁸³ Hence, Xerxes's first political-religious realization was intolerance towards the *daivas*. The tolerance policy towards non-Persian religions (*anarya-*), which was instead the characteristic of a direct attitude of indifference political pragmatism,⁸⁴ was replaced by the religious disregard towards non-Iranian deities.

⁸⁰ On the problem of Zarathustra's time with further literature, Ahn 1992: 95ff.; Skjærvø 2011; Grenet 2015; Hintze 2015; Humbach 2015; de Jong 2015; Skjærvø 2015.

⁸¹ Herzfeld 1937: 74ff.

⁸² Boyce 1982: 174ff. According to her, the *daiva* country could be as well identified with Egypt, Babylon and even Athens.

⁸³ Boyce 1982: 174ff.: "Old Persian *daiva* is equivalent to Avestan *daeua*; and the natural interpretation of Xerxes's words is that, as a Zoroastrian, he was recording the destruction of an Iranian sanctuary devoted to the worship of those warlike beings condemned by the prophet."

⁸⁴ Cf. Firpo 1986: 376ff.; Ahn 1992: 120; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2001: 334; Campos Mendez 2006; Riminucci 2006: 189. For those scholars, it is hard to believe that specific belief systems would be banned from the empire. On several occasions, foreign cults of newly subjected populations were accepted without any difficulty, as long as they fulfilled their assigned tribute obligations. Pragmatism ought to be the central theme since the integration of new subjects, given the Achaemenid imperial structure, was facilitated by the fact that their pre-existing administrative arrangements, including religious systems, were absorbed by the empire. In my opinion, the Achaemenid expediency towards foreign peoples for the sake of imperial cohesion should be hereby discussed instead of "tolerance." On the word *aranya-*, Gignoux 1985.

Deities the *daivas* have repeatedly been identified with were either Mithra or Anahita.⁸⁵ This identification is rather unlikely since they still had a prominent place in the Zoroastrian pantheon independently of their omission in the *Gāthās*. Furthermore, their cults, especially under Darius and Xerxes, present an unbroken tradition, and both gods enjoyed the same rank as Ahuramazda in later royal inscriptions during the reign of Artaxerxes II (ca. 405/4–359/8) and Artaxerxes III (ca. 359/8–338).⁸⁶

Another variant of this theory assumes that the confrontation of Zoroastrianism with the ancient Iranian cults began in pre-Achaemenid times continued throughout Xerxes's reign. The gods of these ancient cults should be therefore identified with the *daivas*, the Avestan *daevas*.⁸⁷ Although not fully elaborated, Boyce considered that not only religious considerations could have played a significant role, but also reasons linked with the royal family's legitimation.⁸⁸

Following Frye's considerations, the *daivas* were not foreign deities, but rather Indo-Iranian gods still worshiped within the ancient Iranian heartland.⁸⁹ His argument is based on the volume concentration of XPh copies discovered around the Iranian Fars, especially in Persepolis and Pasargadae. Accordingly, Xerxes's actions would strongly allude to the cultural and religious Iranization process of Fars. In other words, it was all about the cultural clash, for which the Great King took repressive actions against Elamite ancient traditions for the sake of personal beliefs. Frye's theory brings numerous questions rather than answers and, also, is based on as yet unproven grounds. The significant problem is the lack of archeological evidence in the region. So far, there has not been any archeological site confirming the existence of an Ahuramazda temple or, for that matter, cult.⁹⁰ The same

⁸⁵ Dandamayev 1976: 226ff.

⁸⁶ Herzfeld 1937: 75; Frye 1984. Cf. A²Ha, A²Hb, A²Sa, A²Sd, A³Pa.

⁸⁷ Boyce 1984: 294. The only difference between Boyce and Herzfeld is that, in her version, there is no direct reference to the involvement of the Median Magi. Still, the spectrum of possible actors in this conflict is widened.

⁸⁸ This will be adequately addressed below.

⁸⁹ Frye 1984.

⁹⁰ Against this statement, Tilia 1972: 241ff.; Ghirshman 1976: 11ff.

goes for any evidence regarding the destruction of temples in Fars during Xerxes's reign or, let us say, during the first half of the fifth century BC. The second problem is that several cuneiform tablets from Persepolis seem to speak against the "Iranization" of Fars—and therefore, the whole Iranian world.

These tablets are grouped into two sets: the Persepolis Fortification Tablets (PFT) and the Persepolis Treasury Tablets (PTT). The first group (PFT) consists of *ca.* thirty thousand tablets and fragments and is dated to Darius's reign (*ca.* 510–494). The second group (PTT), a smaller set than the first one—consisting of *ca.* 750 tablets and fragments—is dated between 492 and 458. The whole material has not yet been fully published.⁹¹ In the PFT set, we can find individual tablets—54 so far—dealing with "*rations for individuals with religious functions*"⁹² and also with the allocation of food rations for the so-called "*lan ceremony*." Even though many religious ceremonies sponsored by the Persian empire in the form of regular food distribution are listed,⁹³ we can observe that the *lan* ceremony was the only significant sacrificial cult, "*für das von der Verwaltung ganz regelmäßige Zuteilungen ausgegeben wurden, Monat für Monat*."⁹⁴ This cultic diversity, maintained, promoted, and even cultivated by the empire, thus proves the free religious atmosphere in Persepolis and surroundings, contradicting the cultural Iranization of Fars.⁹⁵ However, precaution has to be the first of our considerations when dealing with this material. The volume published of PFT and PTT is though too insignificant to draw any decisive conclusion, but at least we can observe certain tendencies that contradict what was postulated so far.

⁹¹ For PFT, Hallock 1969; Hallock 1973; Hallock 1978; Hallock 1985; Henkelman 2008: 58ff. For PTT, Cameron 1948; Cameron 1958; Cameron 1965. On the *état de la question*, Jones and Stopler 2008, Razmjou 2008. Only two out of the thirty thousand of the PFT (6,7%) and one out of the seven hundred fifty of the PTT (13,34%) have been so far published.

⁹² Hallock 1969: 25ff. This group is labeled as "K1 texts."

⁹³ Ceremonies, such as Šip, Akriš, Nah, Nuaš, Pumazziš and Dausik are to be listed (cf. Razmjou 2004: 104).

⁹⁴ Koch 1992: 227. Cf. also Razmjou 2004: 106ff.; Henkelman 2008: 208ff.

⁹⁵ This ceremony expanded geographically from Persepolis (district I), through Shiraz (district II), to Fahlian and north (district III/IV). Against this view, Abdi 2007: 62.

Common ground to all these theories is the Achaemenid kings' Zoroastrian faith, the semantic affinities between the Avestan *daevas* and the XPh *daivas*, and the Iranian nature of the *daiva*. These three points have to be addressed now.

The Zoroastrian Confession of the Achaemenids

The Zoroastrian literature is traditionally composed of six different text groups: the Avesta, a large number of clay tablets in Emalite, few Aramaic inscriptions, Sassanian inscriptions, Pahlavi texts (either Avestan translations or commentaries), and the Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions.⁹⁶ The reason for this arrangement should not be surprising: The Old Persian inscriptions make it clear as daylight that Ahuramazda is one of the most important deities for the Achaemenid kings, but not the only one. Mithra and Anahita were also mentioned in the royal inscriptions of Artaxerxes II and Artaxerxes III. General formulae reinforce this declaration, such as:

- *baga vazrka A.uramazdā* ("the/a great god is Ahuramazda"),⁹⁷
- *A.uramazdā imām dahyāum/ima xšaça/imām būmīm manā frābara* ("Ahuramazda bestowed upon me this land/this kingdom/this earth"),⁹⁸
- *vašnā A.uramazdahā* ("by the favor of Ahuramazda"),⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Cf. Skjærvø 2011: 318–320.

⁹⁷ The adjective *vazrka-* ("big, great") is commonly used as an epithet mainly for either Ahuramazda or the kings underlining these two figures' role for the imperial order. Exceptionally, it can also appear to depict further *būmī-* ("earth") and *xšaça-* ("kingship"). Cf. Schmitt 2014: 278.

⁹⁸ The compound verb *fra-bar* ("to bestow, to confer") appears exclusively with those three words, and always having Ahuramazda as subject (cf. Schmitt 2014: 152), remarking, among other things, that relationship between Ahuramazda and the king, his main subject on earth. Following the logic of imperial ideology, Ahuramazda is the only being able to bestow anything through his will upon anyone.

⁹⁹ The substantive *vašna-* ("favor, will") only occurs together with this very stereotypical phrase (cf. Schmitt 2014: 277).

- *A. uramazdāmaī upastām abara* (“Ahuramazda bore me aid”),¹⁰⁰
- *mām A. uramazdā pātu* (“me may Ahuramazda protect”).¹⁰¹

If we only were to consider this piece of evidence, it would seem quite evident that the Achaemenids took part in a belief system in which Ahuramazda was the most prominent deity. Nevertheless, this conundrum is not as apparent as it would seem to be, nor is it an easy one to find an answer for. The academic discussion has not reached a consensus on the question of whether this god is the same one Zarathustra himself preached, whether the embodiment of the Achaemenid Ahuramazda can be traced back to Zarathustra’s reform(s), and to what extent the Achaemenid kings were, in fact, Zoroastrians.¹⁰² Unfortunately, all these unresolved problems cannot be addressed on these pages. However, it can be addressed the similar grounds through which we might tilt the balance in favor of the Achaemenids’ Zoroastrian faith, entailing that the Achaemenids were, at a very least, familiar with the Zoroastrian literature available to them—if not the whole Avesta, at a very least the *Gāthās*.¹⁰³

The Zoroastrian Henotheism

The first time the Avesta was written down was a little after 600 CE. Before this point, we are dealing with a collection of different texts, thematically similar, composed orally around the second and first mil-

¹⁰⁰ The substantive *upastā-* (“aid, assistance”) appears exclusively in phrases with the verb *abra* (to give, to bear). Cf. Schmitt 2014: 265ff. The word *A. uramazdāmaī* can appear without the enclitic particle *-maī*.

¹⁰¹ The verb *pā-* (“protect, guard”) is predominantly used in this formula directed to Ahuramazda. In later inscriptions, we can see it with an invocation to Mithra and Anahita. The invoked protection should only be granted for the king, his father, house, land, and achievements (cf. Schmitt 2014: 223).

¹⁰² For further literature, Ahn 1992: 95; Henkelman 2008; Skjærvø 2011; Hintze 2015; de Jong 2015.

¹⁰³ Due to its two primary linguistic forms, the Avesta is formally divided into the *Old* and *Young(er) Avesta*. The *Old Avesta* is composed of the five *Gāthās* (the *Ahunauuaitī Gāthā*

lennia BCE. However, the oldest manuscript we have access to comes from either the thirteenth or fourteenth century.¹⁰⁴ Hence, we are talking about an interval of over fifteen hundred years between its composition and transcription. It would certainly be absurd to reckon that the religion preached by Zarathustra did not undergo significant changes throughout all these centuries.¹⁰⁵

The idea of Spitama Zarathustra and his monotheism is very modern, at least among Western scholars, deeply influenced by the image of the Old Testament's Moses.¹⁰⁶ This monotheistic image of the prophet was then linked to his reform in the pre-Islamic world. This reform would entail, on the one hand, the rejection of the inherited Indo-Iranian beliefs and, on the other hand, the preaching of a new reformed monothetic religion whose principles are described in his *Gāthās*.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, as clearly stated by Skjærvø, there is nothing in the *Gāthās* themselves, attributed directly to Zarathustra by a large majority of scholars, that could suggest either a reform or his teachings. Moreover, his image appeared in the *Gāthās* already heavily transformed—or even mythologized—as an ideal ritual model.¹⁰⁸ This conclusion profoundly affects not only our idea of Zarathustra himself—his historicity—but also his reform and teachings—the rigorous monotheism ascribed to Zoroastrianism. Howbeit, the notion of Zarathustra and his monotheism is still very omnipresent, so that even the idea of other deities in the Old Avestan has been emphatically rejected. New philological research has made groundbreaking improvements with new and improved translations of the *Gāthās*, as well as of the Avesta.¹⁰⁹ These let us explicitly recognize in the several

[Yasna 28–43], the *Uštaiti Gāthā* [Yasna 43–46], the *Spəntāmāniiu Gāthā* [Yasna 47–50], the *Vohuxšaθrā Gāthā* [Yasna 51] and the *Vahištōišti Gāthā* [Yasna 53] and the *Yasna Haptanhāiti*. Zarathustra himself is traditionally regarded as the author of the *Gāthās* (cf. Skjærvø 2003–2004; Panaino 2007).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Kellens 1998.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. de Jong 2015.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Herrenschildt 1987: 230. On Zoroastrianism in Greek sources, de Jong 1997: chapter 3.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Skjærvø 2011.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Molé 1963; Skjærvø 2011.

¹⁰⁹ Humbach 1991; Hintze 2007.

passages throughout the Old Avesta that other *ahuras* (*Aməša Spəntas*: Ahuramazda's first creations) exist besides Ahuramazda and show up as personified beings, such as Good Thought (*Vohu Manah*), Best Order (*Aša Vahišta*), The Well-Deserved or Worthy (royal) Command (*Xšaθra Vairya*), Life-Giving Humility (*Spentā Ārmaiti*), Wholeness (*Haurvatāt*), and Immortality (*Amərətāt*).¹¹⁰

Now, coming back again to the Achaemenid inscriptions, it is clear that this conception of divinity pluralism was carried on without hesitation. Even before deities like Mithra and Anahita began to be explicitly mentioned, this plurality was already fully acknowledged. The following formulae illustrate this assertion:

- *A.uramazdahā hadā (visaibiš) bagaibiš* (“Ahuramazda together with [all] the gods”),¹¹¹
- *A.uramazdāmaṇ upastām abara, utā aniyāha bagāha tayai hanti* (“Ahuramazda bore me aid and the other gods who are”),¹¹²
- *A.uramazdahā, haya maθišta bagānām* (“Ahuramazda, the greatest of gods”).¹¹³

Though not openly mentioned, other deities' existence is fully attested in the Old Persian inscriptions and the *Gāthās*, leaving no space for doubts. However, without trying to determine the pantheon of Zoroastrianism, it can be ensured that in both literary sources, a prominent place within this pantheon was granted to Ahuramazda alone, the greatest and supreme of gods. Hence, the Old Persian faith, call it Mazdaism or Zoroastrianism, is undoubtedly a henotheistic belief system.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Plut. *Mor.* 370 A (= *Is.* 47).

¹¹¹ Found four times with *visaibiš* in DPd (three times) and DSe; and nine times without *visaibiš* in DSt, XPb, XPc, XPd, XPg, XSc, XVa, D²Sa, and A²Hd.

¹¹² Found only twice in DB.

¹¹³ Found eight times in AsHa, DHa, DPd, DPh, DSf, XEa, XVa, and A²Hc.

Semantic and Lexical Dualism

When depicting the education of Persian children, Herodotus stated that these were particularly instructed in horse riding (*ἵππεύειν*), archery (*τοξεύειν*), and telling the truth (*ἀληθίζεσθαι*).¹¹⁴ Afterward, Herodotus says that the Persians “*hold lying to be the foulest of all*.”¹¹⁵ The emphasis Herodotus put on the remark of “telling lies” (*ψεύδεσθαι*) has some particular resemblance to the dualism found in the Gathic and Young(er) Avestan *aša-drug* doctrine. This conceptual similitude can also be traced back to the dualistic *ṛta-drauga* conflict of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions best exemplified with Darius’s texts and XPh.¹¹⁶ In the *Ahunaavaitī Gāthā* (*Yasna* 32, 3–5), Zarathustra rejected the *daevas*, paragon of evil thoughts, words, and actions.¹¹⁷ By doing so, Zarathustra tries to contrast the difference between Evil Thinking (*Aka Manah*) and the world of Lies (*drug*), on the one hand, and between Good Thought (*Vohu Manah*) and the world of Truth (*aša*). This terminology is strikingly akin to the one used in XPh, particularly in the paragraphs exposed above. In XPh, the term *daiva* is used in a pejorative sense and appears in the background of this polarizing world view, precisely as seen in the Avesta. Kellens also demonstrated convincingly that the Old Persian dualistic conception entails another linguistic phenomenon featured in both the Avesta and the Achaemenid inscriptions called the “lexical dichotomy.”¹¹⁸ The lexical dichotomy should be understood as the doubling of the vocabulary, allowing a strict classification of an expression into a negative or positive context, occurring with the help of two words available for a term.¹¹⁹

Both points prove the linguistic correspondence of Old Persian with Avestan terms and demonstrate that Old Persian as a language,

¹¹⁴ Hdt. I 136, 2: “*παιδεύουσι δὲ τοὺς παῖδας ἀπὸ πενταέτεος ἀρχζάμενοι μέχρι εἰκοσαέτεος τρία μῶνα, ἰχνεύειν καὶ τοξεύειν καὶ ἀληθίζεσθαι*” (cf. How and Wells I 1936: 116).

¹¹⁵ Hdt. I 138, 1: “*αἰσχιστον δὲ αὐτοῖσι τὸ ψεύδεσθαι νενόμισται*.”

¹¹⁶ Cf. Bianchi 1977: 3ff.; Boyce 1982: 118ff.; Kellens 1983: 112ff.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Humbach 1991: II 94ff.

¹¹⁸ Kellens 1983: 112ff.

¹¹⁹ Criticism of this can be found in Widengren 1965: 145.

like Old Avestan, tends to operate in a very dualistic manner, pairing moral and ethical concepts also found in the *Gāthās*.¹²⁰

The Semantic Affinities between Daēuuas (Avesta) and Daiva (XPh)

The Old Persian *daiyā* comes from the reconstructed Old Indo-Iranian *daiuá-* (“heavenly, celestial, god”). Its semantic value as a word describing celestial beings was carried on by other Indo-Iranian languages, best exemplified by the Vedic Sanscrit (*devá-* for “heavenly, luminous, divine”). Its etymological equivalent is well represented by the Latin word *deus/divus*, reflecting its Indo-European origin.¹²¹ With the emergence of both Old and Young(er) Avestan languages, we start to witness specific changes on a semantic level since *daēuua-* began to mean mainly “demon,” even though it was still used to describe “god,” although to contrast with the word *mašiiā*—man. For in the *Gāthās*, they still constitute a separate category of divinities, although partially rejected and not always categorized as intrinsical maleficent beings.¹²² The *daēuuas* were still worshiped at Zarathustra’s lifetime by people who already accepted the religion of the *Gāthās* (*Yasna* 32.8) and Iranian leaders (*Yasna* 32.3, 46.1). With the *Gāthās*, the *daēuuas* also start to be reproached for being incapable of proper divine discernment and for accepting the improper religion. Their full rejection and demonization within the Zoroastrianism were slowly taking place, so much so that they are represented in the Young(er) Avesta as small, malevolent, and deceitful genies whose primary function is the disturbance of the world order, human welfare, and orderliness in human religious life. In other words, to directly antagonize the world order established by Ahuramazda.¹²³ Although this development seems to be relatively

¹²⁰ For further examples of Avestan formulae in the Old Persian beyond the *Gāthās*, Skjærvø 1999.

¹²¹ The word is attested only once in Greek by Hesychios of Alexandria (s. v. *Δεῖβας*; ed. Latte 1953: 421).

¹²² Benveniste 1967; Kellens 1983. Cf. *Yasna* 44.20.

¹²³ Whether the complete rejection of the *daēuuas* from the Zoroastrian pantheon was a development initiated by Zarathustra is not the subject of this paper. For further analysis on the subject, Skjærvø 2015: 416.

gradual in the sacred texts, it is near to impossible to single out at which point precisely in the history of Zoroastrianism this transformation occurred.¹²⁴ What we encounter in the Old Persian terminology on the *daiva* is undoubtedly a truly clear rendition of this word from the Avestan, for its negative sense was nearly precisely incorporated into the Old Persian tradition reflected in XPh.

However, we also have to admit that it is challenging to reconcile quite fragmentary and scarce—represented by the Old Persian sources—with chronologically irregular data—represented by the Avesta.¹²⁵ This observation dramatically hinders from drawing any conclusion on how radicalized Xerxes seemed to be for some of the most prominent scholars. The fact is that, at the very least, the Achaemenids were very conscious about the Zoroastrian literature, so much so that it was a relevant thematic constant on their inscriptions. Nevertheless, the degree of Xerxes's Zoroastrian faith cannot be established through the evidence of usage of a single word four times.

The Iranian Origin of the Daivas (or their Identification with Iranian Gods)

At the beginning of this section, it was pointed out that Herzfeld considered the denomination *baga* exclusively for foreign deities, whereas *daivas* would have been reserved for Iranian gods. Though probably unwillingly, his research scheme was reduced to a dualistic working frame, reinforced partially for his problematic interpretation of the Avestan and Old Persian, whose linguistic interpretations fell victim to several philological inaccuracies, given the time he happened to live in. One might even say, some of the readings Herzfeld was relying on for his interpretations are outdated.

¹²⁴ Cf. Nyberg 1938: 96; Bianchi 1977; Boyce 1975: 17ff., 251ff.; Boyce 1982: 17; Boyce 1992: 72ff.

¹²⁵ For further arguments on the reconciliation of these two factors, Herrenschildt and Kellens 1993.

Nevertheless, his influence is undeniable. Almost all his remarks on the XPh puzzle have set the benchmark for further discussion: translation and interpretation of unclear Old Persian words, the dating, an interpretative model to contextualize the inscription. However, much of his assertions denote rushed attempts to try to coerce fragmentary evidence he had at his disposal into very disputed conclusions. The evidence that reassures the Old Iranian origin of the word *daiva* cannot be denied.

On the other side, the fact that no known Iranian dialects attest to the survival of a positive sense for this word cannot be the result of innovation but rather should be understood as an original element of the Iranian language and religion themselves.¹²⁶ This certainty revolves around the word itself, not around the identification of the *daivas* themselves. Not even in the *Gāthās*, the *daēuuas* can be singled out by name, but instead, they are identified as an anonymous collective of beings whose only mission is to disturb everything Ahuramazda has set out in the world for humanity and its well-being. This assertion is best exemplified through the following formulae:

Y. 30, 6: *aiiā nōiṭ ərəš vīšiiātā daēuuācinā, hiiat īš ā dābaomā
pərəs<ə>mnəṅg upā jasat, hiiat vərənātā acištəm manō,
at aēšəməm həṇduuārəntā, yā bənaiien ahūm marətānō.*

Y. 30, 6: The Daevas do not at all discriminate rightly between these two (spirits). Because delusion comes over them when they take counsel, so that they choose the worst thought. Therefore, they gather with Wrath, with which the mortals sicken existence.¹²⁷

Y. 32, 3: *at yūš daēuuā vīspānhō Akāt Manənhō stā ciθrəm,
yascā vā maš yazaitē, Driūjascā Pairimatōišcā;
šiiāomqm aipī daibitānā, yāiš asrūdūm būmiiā haptaiθē,*

¹²⁶ Herrenschildt and Kellens 1993.

¹²⁷ Text according to Humbach 1991; West 2011. Translation by the former.

Y. 32, 3: (Zarathustra speaks): But you, O you Daevas all, are seed (sprung) from Evil Thought, and (so is that alleged) master who worships both, you as well as the activities of Deceit and Contempt, for which you, again and again, have become notorious in (this) seventh (of the seven climes) of the world.

*Y. 32, 4: yāṭ yūš tā fra.mīmaθā, yā mašīiā acištā dantō
vaxšəntē daēuuō.zuštā, vaṇhəuš sīzdiiamnā manəḥhō,
Mazdā Ahurahiiā xratəuš nasiiantō Ašāatcā*

Y. 32, 4: insofar as you order those worst (things), (by) offering which the mortals may grow (as) minions of (you) Daevas, flinching from good thought (and) straying from the intellect of the Wise Ahura and from Truth.

*Y. 32, 5: tā dəbənaotā mašīm hujiiātōiš amərə<ta>tātascā,
hiiat yā akā manəḥhā yəṇg daēuuəṇg akascā mainiiuš,
akā šīiaoθnəm vacanḥā yā fra.cinas drəguuanəntəm xšaiiō.*

Y. 32, 5: Therefore, you lure the mortal one away from good life and immortality, because the evil spirit along with evil thought (had lured) you, the Daevas, (away from them), (the evil spirit) as well as the action (inspired) by the evil word, by which a ruler recognizes a deceitful person.

This is how the Old Persian *daivas* should be interpreted, namely as the metaphorical representation of everything that can put the world order in peril. The world order, as given to humankind, is the manifestation of Ahuramazda's will and, as such, should be protected through god's designated agent on earth, the Persian king. Out of an ideological-propagandistic perspective, the Achaemenid king's mission is to safeguard the world order given by Ahuramazda. From a pragmatic point of view, this means that the king must protect his position of power no matter what, since whichever disturbance that came about within his sphere of control always threatened his situation, somewhat precarious.

That is the main reason why Gregor Ahn entitled his Ph.D. dissertation “*Religiöse Herrscherlegitimation im Achämenidischen Iran.*” By using the word *Herrscherlegitimation* (“legitimation of sovereign”) and not *Herrschaftslegitimation* (“legitimation of sovereignty”), he rightly remarks that the monarchy as a form of government was never questioned, but rather the person in charge whose power was bestowed upon him as designated successor of previous kings or taken over by and for him.

One last variant of the Iranian theory should be discussed. A. Olmstead in 1948 argued, based primarily upon Roman sources, that the XPh discussion should not be focussed on the Iranian heartland but rather on Bactria, for this satrapy was the troubled land led by Ariamenes, according to Plutarch and Justin, satrap of Bactria, Xerxes’s half-brother, and Darius’s oldest son.¹²⁸ After Darius’s death and finding out that Xerxes was eligible to the throne, Ariamenes, as the oldest son, marched from Bactria to meet the newly appointed king for claiming back the position he supposedly was to inherit.¹²⁹ On the other hand, Olmstead also sought to identify the *daivadana* in the land of the Dahae, a remote region from the Iranian heartland where the cult to Ahuramazda might have well been alive. Being ready to contend with his half-brother over the throne, Ariamenes was then placated by Xerxes with gifts and promised to become the Persian court’s highest after the king himself. Accepting these conditions, Ariamenes voluntarily put the diadem onto his brother’s head.

Due to the quite contradictory and sparse written sources, we can observe that Ariamenes as the satrap of Bactria did not rebel against his brother and the empire. However, as Darius’s first-born son, he only raised some objections against Xerxes, which were finally settled by his paternal uncle (Artabanos in Plutarch and Artaphanes in

¹²⁸ Plut. *Mor.* 173b (= *Reg. et imp. apoph.*), *Mor.* 488d (= *De frat. amor.* 18); *Themist.* 14.3; *Iust.* II 10. According to this description, we can identify this Ariamenes with Artobazanes, Darius’s first-born son.

¹²⁹ *Mor.* 173b. Notwithstanding the elaborateness in *Mor.* 488d, Plutarch assesses the following: *Ἀριαμένης μὲν οὖν κατέβαινεν ἐκ Μήδων* and not from Bactria. In *Hdt.* VII 2, Xerxes fell into disagreement over the right to the throne with Artobazanes, not Ariamenes.

Justin).¹³⁰ E. Benveniste and P. Briant equated the Ariamenes story and character with the Herodotean episode of Masistes, implying that Plutarch's description represents a corruption of the Herodotean tradition.¹³¹ The story origins of Masistes and Ariamenes, apart from the fact that they would represent the same person, are quite different from each other and diverge in nearly every detail: the former was ready to become premeditatedly insurgent from Bactria based on the humiliation of his wife, which Xerxes prevented in due time with severity. Instead, the latter only claimed the throne's right as first-born in peace, which he voluntarily renounced peacefully. Except for the equation between the Old Persian name "Masistes" (*maθišta-*), whose translation into Greek would be *μέγιστος*, and the honorary title awarded to Ariamenes, "the highest after the Great King,"¹³² there is no convincing reasons to regard both figures as the same.¹³³

As far as the *daivadana* is concerned, Olmstead assured that these were the *Dahā*, nomadic people located in the region east of the Caspian Sea or the river Iaxartes, who, according to Strabo.¹³⁴ Regardless of Olmstead's attempt to locate the *daiva* episode within the Iranian region (Bactria and Dahā), it is not easy to assume that we are dealing with two different events. As already stated, it seems more comprehensible that both episodes deal with the same population.

Although every single version of this group of theories has been the center of multiple scholarly discussions when dealing with the XPh interpretation, they lack any factual corroboration and methodological

¹³⁰ Cf. Briant 2002: 524; Riminucci 2006: 193.

¹³¹ Benveniste 1966: 53; Briant 2002: 524.

¹³² Plut. *Mor.* 173b (ἐκ τούτου μέγιστος ἦν [*i.e.*, Ariamenes] παρ' αὐτῷ [*i.e.*, Xerxes] καὶ παρείχεν εὐνοὺν ἑαυτόν), *Mor.* 488d ([Xerxes speaking]: "τούτοις σε τιμᾷ νῦν Ξέρξης ὁ ἀδελφός: ἐὰν δὲ βασιλεὺς ἀναγορευθῇ, πάντων ἔση παρ' αὐτῷ μέγιστος").

¹³³ It remains open whether Olmstead was of this opinion. Based on Briant's interpretation, this would seem to have been the case, for neither Plutarch nor Justin mentioned a revolt or, at the very least, the attempt of one. In contrast, Herodotus is the only reference to this brotherly quarrel (cf. Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1980: 69–73).

¹³⁴ Strab. XI 8, 2. In Tac. *Ann.* XI 10, 2, it is the river Sinden "*quod Dahas Ariosque disternat.*"

completeness that would suggest a solution for XPh. From Herzfeld's erroneous assumption that the word *baga* refers to only non-Iranian deities, up until Frye's remarks whose logic can be neither confirmed nor refuted by the available material to us, the theories discussed above remain mostly either refused or unproven. A final consideration to this section is that all these theories have clearly shown a certain theoretical obstinacy for wanting to understand the XPh irreversibly in a religious manner, hindering a fuller and richer interpretation of this inscription tremendously.

The Ahistorical Character of XPh

The last hypothesis, defended in particular by two well-known scholars specialized in Achaemenid history, has given rise to a novel perspective worthy of analysis, attempting to provide an original interpretation of XPh. According to Briant and H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, XPh is a unique text whose primary function is the proclamation and declaration of royal power and authority to a broad audience—the Persian subjects. This text deliberately used specific linguistic formulae, which in this case were heavily laden not only with Zoroastrian connotations but also with ancient Near Eastern elements—particularly of Assyrian and Babylonian origins—, in order to create an institutionally and ideologically simplified communication channel among the kings and their subjects, and to legitimize and recognize the rulers' position as head of the Persian empire in the face of their subjects.¹³⁵ Moreover, due to the tremendous chronological vagueness not only in this inscription but also in the entire corpus of Achaemenid inscriptions, it was pointed out that, except for Darius's epitaph in Naqsh-e Rostam (DNA), all Achaemenid cuneiform inscriptions should be ascribed a fundamentally ahistorical character.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Briant 2002; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1980.

¹³⁶ As criticism of the "ahistoricity" of the Achaemenid cuneiform inscriptions, Ahn 1993: 112 (n. 106). It is correct to point out that the royal inscriptions (apart from Darius's tomb inscription) do not have any chronological information. Nevertheless, the lack of chronological infor-

According to Sancisi-Weerdenburg, XPh should be interpreted so that it led us to clearly understand that all insurgents, regardless of their origin, cultural customs, or religious beliefs should be punished and, if necessary, their sanctuaries—or, for that matter, places beloved by those punished—should be destroyed. Accordingly, the word *daivas* would only be a superordinate term used to characterize an undermined place reigned by chaos and confusion, both of which were capable of bringing great embarrassment and uncertainty to the world order bestowed upon the kings by Ahuramazda, as well as to the authority of the rulers in the eyes of the Persian subjects. For this reason, the linguistic formulae used on all inscriptions are intentionally crafted to ensure the kings' optimal self-representations publicly and to legitimize the royal authority within the empire under all circumstances.¹³⁷

Assuming the total absence of chronological and geographical references, Briant concludes that all Achaemenid royal inscriptions—except for DNa—do not constitute narrative texts truthful to historical events but rather serve to announce royal ideology not ascribed to any precise historical framework. The inscriptions were never intended to convey accurate historical narrative information but were exclusively used to legitimize the kings' position and, accordingly, to insurance their royal power against their subjects. As a result, Xerxes's actions do not refer to any punctual uprising carried through by a reluctant nation to the new overlords or any specific royal actions placed in a punctual place or time. In all Achaemenid inscriptions, one can find the same literary *topoi*, according to which every valorous ruler has to be capable to demonstrate his abilities as the new king by permanently restoring the imperial—and thus also the earthly and divine world—order, and, at the same time, securing the justice at the beginning of his reign.¹³⁸

mation does not mean that all events documented on the inscriptions have an ahistorical character. If this had been the case, then an ahistoric character should be attributed to the Achaemenid building inscriptions (proof of the building activity documented on the Xerxes inscriptions in XPa, XPd, XPf (§4, 36–41), XPi, XPm, XSc. References to the building activity of Darius in Xerxes inscriptions in XPc, XPf (§4, 36–41), XSa, XSd).

¹³⁷ Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1980: 29–31, 266ff.

¹³⁸ Briant 2002: 166.

Moreover, the inscriptions intend not only to illustrate the permanence of royal power and the transcendence of royal virtues but also to give to the subjects the image of the boundless power of an almost omnipotent ruler whose dominion is subordinated exclusively to Ahuramazda's will. Briant even goes further with his arguments reaching the following conclusion when discussing the Acheamenids' idealized image of space and imperial power:

It must thus be recognized that neither the lists nor the representations constitute administrative catalogs yielding a realistic image of the imperial realm. It was not administrative districts that the Great Kings wanted to represent. The word used in the inscriptions is dahyu 'people.' The kings did not intend to give a list that was either complete or exact. The inscribed lists are nothing but a selection of subject countries. Darius and his successors are neither archivists nor historians. What they intend to leave to posterity is not administrative data. The inscriptions accompanying the reliefs show instead that what they wished to transmit to their contemporaries was a politico-ideological message.

From this perspective, we can gain a better understanding of the data irregularities found in the different country lists and reliefs since these were not drafted with the intention to portrait historical or, for that matter, accurate events, but to portrait a particular image of the world concerned almost exclusively with political and, most notably, ideological issues.¹³⁹

One could rightly argue as criticism two things: first, both theoretical approaches might seem temptingly too simplistic—at a very first glance—compared to the other theories. However, this new theoretical approach could considerably help to acknowledge, in an improved manner, the discrepancies between Darius's and Xerxes's country lists and reliefs. Again, the logic behind all country lists and reliefs cannot be explained away with the help of specific historical events, but only by the Great King's intentionality, which ultimately cannot be determined

¹³⁹ Briant 2002: 177.

except by the fact that the inscriptions were both instruments of power to spread royal ideology and served to justify their ruling position. This reasoning would be the only factor taken into consideration behind the designing of such monuments, and other examinations should not be considered essential, primarily since they cannot be further explained or verified with the available material. Secondly, one can rightfully question what category Darius's and Xerxes's building inscriptions would belong to within this framework. Although Briant and Sancisi-Weerdenburg never directly addressed this question, it must not be disregarded as it still shows theoretical inconsistencies that need to be explained. Consequently, as in the case of the theories discussed above, this explanatory model remains also partly incomplete.

CONCLUSION

The initial questions asked at the beginning of this paper remain, to a certain extent, still open. First and foremost, it must be admitted that it has been a challenging undertaking to find an adequate answer to a long-unsolved problem with the available material, which can sometimes be very contradictory. Nevertheless, this paper aimed to give the reader a compact introduction into this unresolved problem and from which angle to tackle it, in case someone else wants to continue investigating it more systematically. In the first part of this paper was demonstrated that XPh provides certain reliable information, based upon the well-grounded information, such as the structural continuum regarding the country list and paragraphs §4 and §5. When it comes to interpreting §5 and accurate dating attempts, scholars encounter significant uncertainties that cannot be resolved with the tools we so far have.

The Babylonian theory, considered for several years the largely accurate and practically unchallenged explanatory framework for understanding XPh, was based on the incorrect reading of a Herodotean passage (Hdt. I 183), which could only be revised in 1987. The Athenian theory, which in a sense was a reaction to Herzfeld's Iranian interpretation, also posed several methodological problems,

which in turn were due to the tendentious and arbitrary reading of yet another Herodotean passage.

The Iranian theory—or, better, the group of theories—is indeed quite fascinating, especially since it does not attempt to find a genesis in either Herodotus or any other Greek source—to a large extent. However, the problem with this interpretative model largely depends on how methodological disjointed the group of theories is. Although they share a common starting point—Herzfeld’s considerations—, they tend to take different paths, making it challenging to trace them all together. Another hurdle when analyzing these theories is that one immediately stumbles upon the old scholar discussion of whether the Achaemenid kings were Zoroastrians or not. Although this matter can only be answered under the assertion that the royal inscriptions contain a large amount of vocabulary heavily laden with Zoroastrian connotations, we cannot determine how much influence this confession—for lack of a better word—would have exerted upon pragmatical state affairs. It is noteworthy that even the Iranian scholars themselves are not able to answer whether this deity, as testified on the Achaemenid inscriptions, corresponds perfectly to the same deity preached by Zoroaster. The last variant of the Iranian group of theories is Olmstead’s Bactrian theory, which must be excluded due to theoretical inconsistency.

The exposition and presentation of the first three hypotheses tried to show that Xerxes, unlike his predecessors, made a radical change in the Achaemenid religious policy, confirming the biased Greek image—mainly induced by Herodotus—towards the Persian kings. The last hypothesis is quite fascinating and seems to conclude several deadlocked problems presented in the first theses. This one, putting the ideological nature and function of XPh as center of argumentation, enjoys a high acceptance and consensus among scholars nowadays.¹⁴⁰ For it goes far beyond the textual content of the inscription itself and attempts to bring not only XPh but all inscriptions to a more revealing status, a continuum with regards to their content. By treating them thematically all together and not separately, it tries to pre-

¹⁴⁰ Most notably in de Jong 2015.

vent the mistakes of other interpretative models, which have shown mainly methodological deficit, thus illustrating its methodologic advantage. Although the last explanatory model may also offer a couple of not easily solvable questions, it is the most comprehensive and plausible one up until this point, in my opinion.

As a final remark, this can be added: when becoming king or having been king for already a couple of years, Xerxes intended to present his (recently) acquired unique position to the Persian subjects since the presentation of the royal power was an essential royal matter to be dealt with. Following Darius's example, he first had inscriptions made that would serve to legitimize his precarious position. It is interesting to note that Xerxes, due to his upbringing at the heart of the empire itself—the first generation growing up as a Persian prince—, consciously used specific linguistic formulations strongly marked by religious connotations and viewed as ubiquitous among Persian subjects. Thus, Xerxes set out—continuing his father's strategy—an institutionally and ideologically communication channel among the image he wanted to be perceived by and his subjects—the recipients of this magnificent propagandistic construct. Whether the *daiva* event corresponds to a factual episode in Achaemenid history should not be thus regarded as the neuralgic point for understanding this problem. Instead, we should focus on the deliberate usage—or even instrumentalization—of religious expressions and the function of royal inscriptions as the vehicle of royal propaganda. Indeed, the omission and vagueness of any historical reference points on XPh lead us to believe that the ideological factor was the most crucial element behind this text. Should the public embarrassment and punishment of a specific rebellious population have been the paramount consideration for XPh, the question arises by itself: why then did not Xerxes order his officers to explicitly name that treacherous province so everyone could undoubtedly know to whom is XPh referring? By doing so, Xerxes not only could have set a prime example on how to deal with insubordination through public humiliation but also could have allowed him to present himself as a more active ruler and eager to defend the interest of his empire no matter what.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that XPh and all Achaemenid inscriptions have an absolute ahistorical character, from which no historical information can be referred to. The rhetoric of XPh represents a discourse of royal legitimacy that establishes, through familiar vocabulary to the recipients, that possible reprisals have to be put into effect against subjects who had been unwilling to follow royal orders. The punishment for unsubordinated subjects must be enforced independently of religious and cultural customs.

The “putting it over in its proper place” was not only enforced for the sake of metaphysical consideration—although it does not mean they played a role—but also for the sake of the image the kings tried to maintain to secure their precarious position as long as possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Romina Della Casa, Editor-in-Chief, for allowing me to publish this rather lengthy article in the journal, as well as Jorge Cano Moreno, Associate Editor, whose finishing corrections contributed exceptionally to polishing off some of the rough edges in the final version of the manuscript. I shall also not forget the two anonymous reviewers whose critical and encouraging remarks helped me improve this paper’s first draft tremendously. Any remaining errors are solely the responsibility of the author.

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HUMAN RITUAL KILLING AT DOMUZTEPE AND UR: A BATAILLAN PERSPECTIVE

ZACHARIAS KOTZÉ
zkotzech@yahoo.com
University of South Africa
Pretoria, South Africa

Summary: Human Ritual Killing at Domuztepe and Ur: A Bataillan Perspective

The ritual killing of humans in the ancient Near East has received increased attention in recent years. Material evidence for the practice is commonly interpreted in terms of theories of ritual and sacrifice developed by prominent scholars of comparative religion during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Typical interpretive models include communication and communion with supernatural beings and gift exchange as a social and political tool. This article provides a brief overview of these recent trends in the study of human sacrifice in the ancient Near East before turning to George Bataille's views of the practice in the context of his theories of general economy and religion. It is argued that his notions of expenditure and transgression serve as useful tools for the interpretation of several instances of anthropoctony in the ancient Near East.

Keywords: Human Ritual Killing – Ancient Near East – Bataille – Expenditure – Transgression

Resumen: La matanza de seres humanos en Domuztepe y Ur: una perspectiva Batailleana

La matanza ritual de seres humanos en el Cercano Oriente antiguo ha recibido mayor atención en los últimos años. La evidencia material de esta práctica se interpreta comúnmente en términos de las teorías del ritual y del sacrificio desarrolladas por destacados académicos de la religión comparada de finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX. Los modelos interpretativos típicos incluyen la comunicación y la comunión con seres sobrenaturales y el intercambio de regalos como una herramienta social y política. Este artículo ofrece un breve repaso de estas tendencias recientes en el estudio del sacrificio humano en el Cercano Oriente antiguo para luego enfocarse en la

Article received: June 11, 2020; approved: November 29, 2020.

perspectiva de George Bataille sobre esta práctica en el contexto de sus teorías sobre la economía general y la religión. Asimismo, se argumenta aquí que sus nociones de gasto y transgresión sirven como herramientas útiles para la interpretación de varios casos de antropofagia en el Cercano Oriente antiguo.

Palabras clave: Matanza ritual de seres humanos – Cercano Oriente antiguo – Bataille – Gasto – Transgresión

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, scholarly discussions of the ritual killing of humans in the ancient Near East centred around a few references to the practice in the Hebrew Bible, such as the story of the binding of Isaac in Genesis 22, Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter as recounted in Judges 11, a Moabite king sacrificing his firstborn son as narrated in 2 Kings 3, and references to a Canaanite practice of child sacrifice in 2 Kings 23.¹ However, with increasing archaeological evidence of the ritual killing of humans in various historical periods all over the ancient Near East, increasing numbers of scholars from various fields have joined the discussion. Notable contributions have been made, especially in the collections of essays edited by A. M. Porter and G. M. Schwartz² and A. A. Nagy and F. Prescendi.³ Although not focusing exclusively on the ancient Near East, both of these collections introduce new ways of thinking about the topic of the ritual killing of humans in various periods and regions of the ancient Near East. It is commonly assumed that the routine slaying of humans was a religious act. However, it seems necessary to distinguish between human sacrifice as a religious act involving an offering to supernatural beings and ritual murder. The English term sacrifice derives from the Latin *sacer*, "sacred," and *facere*, "to make," meaning "to make sacred," or "to perform sacred rites."⁴ Although archaeological evidence for the ritual killing of humans is usually discussed as human sacrifice it remains difficult to assess the exact role of religion and belief systems in

¹ Also see Hattingh and Meyer 2017; Masoga and Rugwiji 2018.

² Porter and Schwartz 2012.

³ Nagy and Prescendi 2013

⁴ Schwartz 2017: 224.

the practice in the ancient Near East. For this reason, it seems best to use more neutral terms, such as anthropoctony, with the sense of the slaying of humans in a ritual manner, when discussing instances of the ritual murder of humans in the ancient Near East.⁵

The initial goal of this paper is to provide a brief overview of the most influential interpretations of human ritual killing in the ancient Near East. Many scholars have tended to place the ritual killing of humans in the context of offerings to supernatural beings as part of communal feasting, thereby reviving R. Smith's communion theory of sacrifice.⁶ Others have focused on the consecrating effect of sacrifice, building on the landmark study of H. Hubert and M. Mauss.⁷ Mauss' famous study of gift exchange has also been popular among scholars to analyse the social and political implications of the apparently flamboyant and conspicuous immolations of humans in the ancient Near East.⁸

Although these scholars have made productive use of the Durkheimian sociological school's theories of sacrifice, the detailed interpretations of human ritual killing by G. Bataille have received little attention.⁹ The latter part of the paper will investigate the applicability of his views to evidence from the material record of the ancient Near East. It will be demonstrated that his interpretations of anthropoctony as the expenditure of excess wealth and the transgression of social codes against violence are particularly useful for an understanding of ritual killing in the ancient Near East, especially at Domuztepe and Ur.

⁵ Volokhine 2013: 41.

⁶ Smith 1889; cf. Tatlock 2006; Pongratz-Leisten 2006; Recht 2010; Carter 2012; Porter 2012; Weber 2012.

⁷ Hubert and Mauss 1964 [1898]; cf. Moses 2012; Kornienko 2015.

⁸ Mauss 1990 [1925]; cf. Pongratz-Leisten 2006; Carter 2012; Recht 2020.

⁹ Bataille 1992 [1949]; 1998 [1973].

Interpretations of Human Ritual Killing in the Ancient Near East: An Overview

Evidence of the ritual killing of human beings in the ancient Near East continues to fascinate scholars. Various explanations of this apparently senseless practice have been developed based on available evidence regarding the social status of the victims, cultural attitudes toward life, death, and human beings in general, religious traditions, and possible political motivations. However, with limited textual evidence, especially with reference to archaeological information from pre-historic periods, a full understanding of the practice remains elusive. In addition, many scholars continue to insist that ceremonial killing routinely involved the recognition of and interaction with supernatural entities. For example, C. Grottanelli defines sacrifice as the offering of something to another realm, or the ritual killing of a victim for the benefit of this superior sphere.¹⁰ Similarly, Humphrey and Laidlaw associate ceremonial slaughter with the offering of a victim to supernatural beings before the target is consumed.¹¹ R. B. Campbell, too, emphasises the aspect of offering to supernatural entities in the context of ritual slaughter.¹² Correspondingly, other scholars have extended the meaning of sacrifice to include diverse forms of ceremonial immolations.¹³ However, while it is not always possible to assess the role of belief systems in ritualistic slayings it seems best to differentiate between carnages, for example in the context of funerary rituals, such as accompaniment deaths, and human sacrifice in a religious context involving procedural offerings to supernatural beings.¹⁴

¹⁰ Grottanelli 1999: 6.

¹¹ Humphrey and Laidlaw 2007.

¹² Campbell 2012.

¹³ Nagy and Prescendi 2013: 7.

¹⁴ Schwartz 2017: 224.

Offering to Supernatural Entities

Many scholars interpret the ritual killing of humans as a religious act involving communication with supernatural entities. Tatlock, for example, defines sacrifice as killing with the goal of influencing supernatural spiritual beings.¹⁵ Focusing on evidence from the renowned, so-called “Royal Cemetery” of ancient Ur in Mesopotamia, L. Recht points out that in the absence of clear iconographic and textual evidence, all interpretations of the ritual killing of humans remain speculative.¹⁶ The Royal Cemetery comprises about 16 out of hundreds of graves over a large area and covering a time span of around 1200 years. Although many possible explanations for the ritual killing of humans at ancient Ur have been advanced through the years, Recht proposes that the ultimate long-term purpose of immolations at these sites was communication with the supernatural, as suggested, according to her, by the fact that scenes were eventually buried to be hidden from public view.¹⁷

Interpreting human ritual killings as offerings to deities, B. Pongratz-Leisten discusses the practice within the broader context of anthropoctony in the ancient Near East.¹⁸ The scapegoat ritual, which had its origin in Northern Mesopotamia, serves as an example of human sacrifice as an offering to a deity with the goal to eliminate bad fortune. For example, in a Hittite ritual dating to *ca.* 1350 BCE designed to eliminate pestilence, a ram is chosen as a substitute for military officers and a woman as a substitute for the king. The victims are adorned with jewelry and sent off into enemy territory together with bread, beer, and milk to draw the illness causing god away from the military camp and so transfer the pestilence to the enemy.

Pongratz-Leisten further suggests that human sacrifice was a cultural means of re-establishing the cosmic order as originally set by the gods.¹⁹ For example, the ritual killing of a substitute king served to mend

¹⁵ Tatlock 2006.

¹⁶ Recht 2010: 168.

¹⁷ Recht 2014: 427; Recht 2020.

¹⁸ Pongratz-Leisten 2006: 3–34.

¹⁹ Pongratz-Leisten 2012: 291–304.

the relationships between kings and the gods. The ritual of the substitute king is well attested under the reign of the Sargonid kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal during the 7th century BCE. It was meant to eliminate threatening elements, especially at times of certain solar and lunar eclipses that foretold the death of the reigning king. At such times, the chief exorcist would choose a substitute while the king would temporarily abdicate. After reigning for a predetermined period, the surrogate king would then be killed and all his requisites, such as the throne, sceptre, and weapons, would be burned before the original king would take up his reign again.

Porter considers human sacrifice as an offering to the gods within the broader context of strategies used by the emerging elite in state formation during the first half of the third millennium BCE.²⁰ She notes that the period was characterised by a breakdown in kinship relations, which were increasingly replaced by class stratification. In this context, the elite used human sacrifice to strengthen relations with ancestors and deities. Referring to a case at Arslantepe, she suggests that the mirroring of the bodies of sacrificial victims points to an expression of the relationship between the living and the dead. By rendering the connection between the two worlds, which are the same, but opposite, visually explicit, it brings them closer, in her view. In the case of the royal tombs at Ur, she argues that the fruit remains that were found, such as apples and dates, as well as a prominent female headdress, could be connected to the cult of Inana/Ishtar, and therefore suggest a ritual context. Further, the staging of sacrificial victims in a *tableau mort* in the Great Death Pit at Ur hints at an attempt to create a moment that would be frozen in time forever, which adds to the religious context and meaning of the sacrifice.

Porter goes on to argue that kinship in the ancient Near East was established through rituals, often through sacrifice. Many treaties required animal sacrifice. The drawing of blood, in her view, served as a symbol for the substance of kinship relations. New kin entering families in this way were often responsible for providing for their adopted parents' continued existence after death and the performance of post-

²⁰ Porter 2012: 191–216.

funerary commemorative rituals. Whereas animal sacrifice sufficed to construe social relations between living parties, human sacrifice, according to her, was used to establish relations with the world of the dead. The need for such relations arose where the death of a royal member was interpreted as caused by divine wrath, or where the right to rule needed to be established after rule had been usurped from a divinely chosen ruler.

J. A. Weber also interprets human sacrifice as an attempt to restore order after the death of a member of the ruling authority.²¹ Also referring to the Ur royal tombs, she associates the immolation of humans with the veneration of ancestors in the context of succession rituals. The goal, in her view, was to engage the ancestors and gods of the netherworld by opening channels of communication through sacrifice.

Turning her attention to human and animal sacrifice in the Halaf period in the late Neolithic at Domuztepe, E. Carter defines sacrifice as an offering in appeasement or homage to a higher power.²² Dating to *ca.* 5570 BCE, the Death Pit at Domuztepe contains evidence of cannibalism, such as butchering marks, dismemberment, and scorching of bones of predominantly prime-aged members of society. The sacrifice of humans and animals was clearly done in the context of a large feast. Noting that the iconography of the period points to complex rituals, the use of masks, and a close association of humans and animals, she suggests that sacrifice at Domuztepe may point to an animistic and shamanistic worldview. Ritual specialists may have negotiated links between humans and animals and between the living and the dead. The destructive immolation and consumption of victims were meant to create strong ties between the living and the dead.

While the majority of scholars associate the ritual killing of humans with communication or communion with supernatural beings, some have also linked it with the creation of sacred space and the practice of magic, particularly in relation to the so-called “construction sacrifices.”

²¹ Weber 2012: 159–190.

²² Carter 2012: 97–124.

Construction Sacrifices: Ensuring Fertility and Creating Sacred Space

T. V. Kornienko notes that anthropoctony was a relatively rare phenomenon in Northern Mesopotamia during the pre-pottery Neolithic.²³ It only occurred at times of special importance to communities. She associates the practice with a period of transition in the Fertile Crescent when humans started to master the domestication of plants. Considering archaeological evidence from sites such as Çayönü Tepesi and Göbekli Tepe, she suggests that ceremonial murder should be interpreted against the background of agricultural practices and ideology. More specifically, it served as a kind of imitative magic based on agricultural experience. In so-called “construction sacrifices,” victims were commonly buried in residential and public buildings to symbolise death and revival in analogy to grains being planted to lead to the sprouting of new life.

Also focusing her study on Northern Mesopotamia in the Neolithic, S. Moses considers possible reasons for child foundation deposits in Çatalhöyük.²⁴ She links the higher than expected infant mortality rate with the beginnings of class stratification. In her view, the child deposits were meant to create sacred spaces and imbue houses with sacred power. In addition, they may have served to create bonds between people and produce links to ancestors.

Establishing Political Control

Centring on the Royal Cemetery of Ur, A. Baardsgaard, J. Monge, and R. L. Zettler foreground the many and varied potential social impacts of the ritual killing of humans during Early Dynastic times in this ancient Mesopotamian city.²⁵ Sir Leonard Woolley, who initially excavated the tombs during the early twentieth century, interpreted the scene at the

²³ Kornienko 2015: 42–49.

²⁴ Moses 2012: 57–78.

²⁵ Baardsgaard, Monge and Zettler 2012: 125–158.

Great Death Pit as a mass suicide during a funerary ritual.²⁶ Questioning this interpretation, Baardgaard, Monge and Zettler point to evidence that the participants did not die peacefully as willing participants. Rather, the cause of death was blunt force trauma to the back of the skull by means of a pick-axe-like weapon, commonly depicted in iconography of the time. In addition, the bodies of victims were treated with mercury sulphide and heated for soft tissue preservation, which suggests that they were kept around for public display after death. The staged *tableaux morts* further clearly point to funerary feasting as an occasion for the sacrificial ritual. It is possible that the victims took part in the funerary rituals before they were killed.

In addition to the staged festival scene, which included musicians, guards, and cart drivers, cylinder seals depicting banquets with people dancing and musical instruments were also found in the tombs. The authors suggest that these were deliberately placed at the scenes to indicate what transpired during the festivals. They further propose that the elaborate spectacle of the carnage at Ur constituted, in addition to possible gifts to the gods or ancestors, a show of power and wealth with the goal to establish and legitimise social and political control.

Similarly, Recht suggests that the ritual slaughter of humans in ancient Ur served to mark the authority of the ruling elite. In addition to the iconic ziggurats created during the latter part of the third millennium BCE, the extravagant and flamboyant human immolations were meant to mark authority and create a strong social impact.²⁷ For comparison, she refers to the practice of anthropotony by the kings and queens of the first dynasty at Abydos in ancient Egypt early in the third millennium BCE.²⁸ Similar to the royal tombs at Ur, the graves of kings and queens at Abydos were surrounded by chambers for the accompanying victims. Although the retainers were probably meant to continue their service to the elite after death, the ostentatious display involved in the ritual mur-

²⁶ Woolley 1934.

²⁷ Recht 2020.

²⁸ Also see Volokhine 2013: 39–64.

der, especially at Ur, were meant to make a social impact and mark the authority of the ruling families. This, in her view, explains why the practice seems to have been short-lived and limited to the emergence of states in the ancient Near East.

Human Ritual Killing at Domuztepe and Ur as Expenditure and Transgression

Bataille demonstrated a strong interest in the topic of human ritual killing in many of his works. Unfortunately, unlike other members of the Durkheimian school, his perspectives on ritual murder have remained largely neglected in investigations of the practice in the ancient Near East. Bataille's interpretation of anthropoctony as expenditure of excess energy in the context of his theory of general economy and his notions of transgression seem particularly useful as interpretive tools with reference to the ritual killing of humans in the ancient Near East, especially at the sites of Domuztepe and Ur.

Anthropoctony and the Expenditure of Excess

Bataille's view of human ritual killing is best understood in the context of his theory of general economy. In his *The Accursed Share* he puts forward the idea of an economic model based on excess energy moving through all living organisms.²⁹ In opposition to the traditional restricted economical model, which focuses on financial capital and production, general economy centres on the consumption of surplus energy. In Bataille's view, like life itself, economy is not only about growth and conservation, as is commonly assumed, but also about loss and ruin.³⁰ Bataille points out that the biosphere cannot contain the proliferation of life caused by the endless exudation of solar energy. The flow of energy also cannot be tamed or placed under the control of man. Energy that

²⁹ Bataille 1992 [1949].

³⁰ Traylor 2014a: 109–112.

cannot be contained in a system or used for growth must be wasted. This leads to luxury, as the optimisation of excess energy into nonutility. According to Bataille, the most luxurious exudation of a system's excess energy, is death.³¹

Bataille therefore proposes that consumption underlies the practice of ritual killing. As life evolved, energy was used to elevate life to higher forms of complexity. The ultimate luxury of a system is the destruction of complex beings as a growth strategy. The higher the complexity of the organism sacrificed, the more luxurious is the non-productive expenditure of energy. In Bataille's view, war in the Aztec societies was the religious act par excellence, since it involved the quest for sacrificial victims, rather than a search for economic or political gain.

Bataille also demonstrated a fascination with the North American potlatch as discussed by Mauss in his *The Gift*.³² However, whereas Mauss emphasised the role of the gift in harmonising relationships, Bataille noted its disruptive nature. Mauss argued that in gift societies the obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate gifts led to an orderly system, which constantly renewed the relationships between parties. In some instances, however, the gift exchange could develop into violent, exaggerated, and antagonistic generosity. In this kind of gift exchange, where nothing is held back, rival chiefs compete for honour and prestige. If a rival fails to reciprocate a gift with interest, he loses social rank and status. The destructive quality of such giving resembles a sacrifice.

The major difference between the views of ritual killing, or sacrifice, as potlatch of Mauss and Bataille is to be found in Mauss' concept of the gift (*don*) and Bataille's notion of expenditure (*dépense*). Referring to the practice among Indian societies of the American North West, such as the Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, and Kwakiutl, Bataille emphasises the irrational, disruptive, destructive, and excessive aspect of the gift.³³ If a gift is given in silence, it has no power. Up until the 19th

³¹ Arculus 2018: 142–145.

³² Mauss 1990 [1925]: 31–40.

³³ Bataille 1992 [1949]: 63–80. Cf. Dorfman 2002: 37–71; Olson 2002: 350–374.

century, Tlingit chieftains would display their power by bringing slaves before a rival and slitting their throats in his presence. If the rival chief wanted to challenge for power, he would have to sacrifice a greater number of slaves.

Further, the power that the giver gains, manifests the absurdity of gifts. Bataille identifies three laws for the acquisition of rank. Firstly, through the squandering of surplus resources, the giver acquires prestige, like a commodity. Secondly, waste itself becomes an object of acquisition. Thirdly, any individual accumulation of wealth is doomed to destruction, since an individual does not really possess it nor the rank that accompanies it. Bataille further suggests that potlatch, like sacrifice, withdraws wealth from productive consumption:

*The victim is a surplus taken from the mass of useful wealth. And he can only be withdrawn from it in order to be consumed profitlessly, and therefore utterly destroyed. Once chosen, he is the accursed share, destined for violent consumption. But the curse tears him away from the order of things; it gives him a recognisable figure, which now radiates intimacy, anguish, the profundity of living beings.*³⁴

Bataille's conceptualisation of ritual killing as the expenditure of excess energy seems particularly useful for an interpretation of human sacrifice in the case of Domuztepe during the late Neolithic. The victims were well-nourished, which, according to Carter, suggests that they were not sacrificed in the context of a power struggle between rival political leaders.³⁵ Rather than fulfilling the function of a conspicuous destruction of wealth in competition with a rival chief for social and political rank, the ritual killing and associated cannibalism in the context of a great feast in this instance may be interpreted as an expenditure of excess energy. Similarly, in the case of the royal tombs of Ur during the third millennium, it may be tempting to interpret the *tableaux morts* and the evi-

³⁴ Bataille 1992 [1949]: 59.

³⁵ Carter 2012: 121.

dence of post-mortem preservation as a kind of potlatch in competition with rival kings. However, as Baardsgaard, Monge, and Zettler point out, there is no clear evidence of similar conspicuous human immolations in the area.³⁶ Again, rather than an attempt to establish relationships with ancestors and gods or compete with rivals, the offering of human lives may have constituted the mere luxurious expenditure of excess energy and wealth.

Anthropoctony and Transgression

Another element of the ritual killing of humans that Bataille foregrounds, which proves useful for the interpretation of anthropoctony in the ancient Near East, is the notion of transgression. Bataille understood transgression as the suspension of the prohibition against violence in ritualistic killing. Sacrifice, or ritual murder, therefore gives access to transgression. Traylor suggests that this aspect of Bataille's theory presents an alternative to R. Girard's popular scapegoat mechanism in that it adds a dimension to religious violence for its own sake, rather than ascribing the function of restoring communal peace to the violent act.³⁷

Girard suggests that the common scapegoat mechanism represents the restaging of an historically real event, where a community unanimously gathers and rallies against an arbitrarily selected victim.³⁸ The societal agitation concentrates itself on this ill-fated victim and results in lethal hysteria, which leads to a cathartic discharge. The collective murder of the victim is mistakenly attributed to an unforeseen benign aspect of the target, who is posthumously credited with reconciling warring members of society and treated to mythic deification. In Girard's view, sacrifice constitutes a stylised re-enactment of the original singling out of a scapegoat. It is therefore an attempt to repeat the conditions which in past experience proved to be effective in producing communal harmony and renewal. Apart from the cathartic societal bene-

³⁶ Baardsgaard, Monge and Zettler 2012: 154.

³⁷ Traylor 2014b: 131.

³⁸ Girard 1982.

fit, the sacrificial event loses its significance, according to Girard. The violent social upheaval, constituting a mimetic crisis, leads to a denouement in the single victim mechanism of the scapegoat.

By contrast, in his *Theory of Religion*, Bataille associates anthropotony with a phenomenology of animal existence.³⁹ He suggests that animal existence is characterised by a state of immanence, immediacy, and uninterrupted continuity in contrast to human existence, which is marked by discontinuity. He envisions animal reality as a nebulous ebb and flow between an organism and her surroundings devoid of purpose, distinction, or meaning. Human existence, on the other hand, encloses itself within boundaries. During the course of evolution, humans started to think of themselves as isolated “things,” in analogy to tools and instruments that existed in separation from themselves. In this state of isolation, death became catastrophic. Subconsciously, however, humans long for the immanence of animal existence that they lost along the way and for the apathy of the predator after the kill.

The introduction of the tool in the history of human evolution marks the passage from continuous to discontinuous existence. Discrete objects were linked to instrumentality and subordinated to future ends. When continuous being became part of the realm of things, the world of the profane was initiated. The sacred became segmented off through the restraint of prohibition. Concerns for security, utility, work, productivity, and rationality became moral obligations. This led to a mode of being that shuts out the immediacy of the present. Human beings started to focus on stability and the creation of a predictable future. Despite these developments, however, humans demonstrate resistance to being reduced to the sphere of utility. The immediacy of the animal world, which elicits both horror and fascination, is experienced as seductively sacred, although it may be regarded as sinister from a moral or religious point of view.

In Bataille’s view, ritual killing allows for the religious prohibition to be transcended in a return to the original condition of continuous being. It lifts the victim out of the realm of the profane and returns her

³⁹ Bataille 1998 [1973].

to the sacred world of immediacy. The priest therefore acts as a mediator who escorts the victim into the lost world of irrational immediacy and animal intimacy. The ultimate goal of ritual killing is not to end life, but to erase the character of being as a thing of use. To make sacred, for Bataille, is to make useless and arbitrary. In this way, the exuberance of life is allowed to flash up briefly before death. While ceremonial slaughter is commonly interpreted as an offering to the gods, in Bataille's view it should rather be seen as a gift of vitality to the victim at the moment it is taken away. Further, the violence of the act is necessary to rupture the barriers separating one self-enclosed being from another. It succeeds in briefly releasing the participants into the euphoric indeterminateness of the moment and to free the victim from the tedium of discontinuous existence. Instead of a scapegoat, therefore, Bataille regards the victim as the accursed share, whose orchestrated slaughter provides participants with a nonlethal glimpse into the sacred world of animal immediacy.

As transgression, ritual murder is non-instrumental. Its goal is to satisfy the immediate lust for violence, and therefore disregards future gain. Anthropoctony constitutes a return to the seamless depths of a lost animality, devoid of ulterior ends, such as peace, order, or status. This interpretation of ritual killing accords well with archaeological and iconographic evidence of the practice in the ancient Near East. As Carter observed with reference to the practice during the Halaf period at Domuztepe, there seems to have been a close association between animals and humans in this period and region.⁴⁰ Iconography hints at complex rituals involving the use of various animal masks, probably by ritual specialists who negotiated not only between the worlds of the living and the dead, but also between human and animal worlds and states of being. Similarly, one of the lyres discovered in the Royal Cemetery of Ur depicts an animal parody of a banquet. As Baardsgaard, Monge, and Zettler pointed out, the iconography on the cylinder seals and the inlays on the instruments left at the scenes were deliberate communications of the meaning to be associated with the events that took place.⁴¹ Again,

⁴⁰ Carter 2012: 119–120.

⁴¹ Baardsgaard, Monge, and Zettler 2012: 151–152.

therefore, Bataille's interpretation of ritual killing as a return to animal immediacy in an act of transgression may well be applied to the practice during various periods and at various sites in the ancient Near East.

Bataille further explains that festivals served to resolve the tension between access to the sacred in ritualistic sacrifice and utilitarian pressures exerted by the social body. In his view, communities tolerate transgression as long as it does not jeopardise survival. Festivals as the context of anthropoctony, as evidenced in the archaeological record at sites such as Domuztepe and ancient Ur, can therefore be interpreted as organised transgression in which the disintegrating and contagious forces of the sacred were adapted to the order of society. These isolated rituals served as scheduled reminders of the darker side of existence.

CONCLUSION

Growing evidence for the practice of anthropoctony at different sites during various periods in the ancient Near East has led to renewed interest in this traditionally neglected topic. With limited textual and iconographic evidence to support interpretations of the material record, scholars have tended to interpret the practice as attempts to communicate with or strengthen ties with supernatural entities, such as ancestors and deities. Others have linked it with the ritualistic creation of sacred space or the formation of social and political power by the elite in periods of state formation. In addition to these interpretations, Bataille's view of human ritual killing as an expenditure of excess energy may also apply to the practice of anthropoctony in certain ancient Near Eastern contexts, such as Domuztepe and Ur. Further, his conception of ritualistic immolations as heterologous transgressions of established social norms in the context of a festival also deserves more systematic consideration as an interpretive tool with reference to the practice in the ancient Near East.

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**SCENE OF FIGHTING WITH SERPENT(S) ON THE OLD
ASSYRIAN SEAL IMPRESSION FROM KÜLTEPE
(PUSHKIN STATE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, I 2 B 1591)***

ALEXANDRE NEMIROVSKY

anemirovskiy@hse.ru

Lomonosov Moscow State University,

Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences,

National Research University "Higher School of Economics"

Moscow, Russia

VLADIMIR SHELESTIN

vshelestin@ivran.ru

Lomonosov Moscow State University,

Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences

Moscow, Russia

ANASTASIA IASENOVSKAIA

anastasia.iasenovskaia@arts-museum.ru

Lomonosov Moscow State University,

Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts

Moscow, Russia

**Summary: Scene of Fighting with Serpent(s) on the Old Assyrian Seal
Impression from Kültepe**

The aim of the article is to publish and present in detail an Old Assyrian sealing from Kültepe (collection of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow), which carries a scene of a hero's struggle with a serpent-like monster. Such scenes are rare in the Ancient Near Eastern art, while the seal is one of the few highly original artifacts from Kültepe (most seals from Kültepe, on the contrary, present images repeated

Article received: October 4, 2020; approved: March 17, 2021

*The research presented in the article is sponsored by the Russian Science Foundation, project no 19-18-00369 "The Classical Orient: culture, world-view, tradition of research in Russia (based on the monuments in the collection of the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts and archive sources)".

Antiguo Oriente, volumen 18, 2020, pp. 207–234.

on other seals from there or other centers). This interpretation of the scene is confirmed in detail by photographs and parallels in the glyptics as well as among other preserved artifacts of cuneiform cultures of the 3rd–1st millennia BC that existed in the Mesopotamian and Syro-Anatolian spaces. The closest parallel to the monster on the seal in question can be seen, apparently, in the monstrous serpent on the famous Neo-Hittite relief from Malatya, suggesting an essential role of Anatolian imagery in the genesis of composition at our seal. The question of the specific myth or plot reflected in this composition remains open.

Keywords: Dragon slayer – Kültepe – Old Assyrian period – Seal – Serpent – The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts.

Resumen: Escena de combate con serpiente(s) en la impresión de un sello paleo-asirio de Kültepe

El objetivo de este artículo es publicar y presentar en detalle un sello paleo-asirio proveniente de Kültepe (colección del Museo Estatal Pushkin de Bellas Artes, Moscú), el cual presenta una escena de combate entre un héroe y un monstruo con forma de serpiente. Tales escenas resultan extrañas para el arte del Cercano Oriente antiguo, y el sello es uno de los pocos artefactos especialmente originales de Kültepe (dado que la mayoría de los sellos allí encontrados presentan imágenes que se repiten en otros sellos del mismo sitio o de otros centros). La interpretación de la escena se encuentra confirmada en detalle por fotografías y hallazgos con algunos paralelos en los glípticos y entre otros artefactos conservados de culturas cuneiformes del tercer al primer milenio a.C. y que existieron en los espacios mesopotámico y siro-anatolio. Los paralelos más cercanos del monstruo en el sello en cuestión, pueden ser vistas, aparentemente, en la monstruosa serpiente del famoso relieve neo-hitita de Malatya, lo cual nos permite hablar de un papel esencial de la imaginería de Anatolia en la génesis de la composición de nuestro sello. La cuestión del mito o de la trama específicos reflejados en esta composición permanece aún abierta.

Palabras clave: Dragon asesino – Kültepe – Período Paleo-asirio – Sello – Serpiente – Museo Estatal Pushkin de Bellas Artes

ITEM IN QUESTION: GENERAL OVERVIEW

The collection of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts (Moscow) includes a little fragment of a clay tablet envelope (inv. N^o. I 2 b 1591) from Kültepe (Kanish) dated to the Old Assyrian colonies period (early 2nd millennium BC). This fragment luckily happens to bear a sealing with an image of significant interest. The fragment entered the

Museum in 1911 as a part of the collection of V. S. Golenishchev, who probably purchased it in Constantinople along with other tablets and tablet fragments of the Old Assyrian period. Although the fragment has been kept in the Museum for over a century, its small size (1.77x2.62x0.62 cm) and a number of damages have for long prevented its publication and the very recognition of the image's details. An attempt to present the outline drawing of this sealing undertaken in 1968 by N. Yankovskaya¹ remained unsatisfactory and, in fact, cannot be considered as its publication: only a few lines from those actually present on the sealing were noticed and shown (thereunto, with errors), and the result does not allow us to understand either the plot of the composition in general, or the meaning of lines shown on the drawing.



Fig.1

Drawing of the clay envelope fragment I 2 b 1591 as in Yankovskaya 1968: 306.

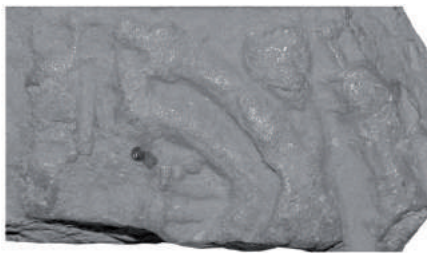
However, at that time it was hardly possible to do more: the sealing is very small and damaged. Only the modern technology of high-resolution digital photography with magnification, combining shooting at different angles with different lighting and using various methods of further computer processing of the obtained images (contrasting, etc.), and collating the results with a detailed study of the clay original under high magnification, has now made it possible for the first time to recognize to a quite reliable degree the main part of the sealing's lines and to get a clear idea of most of the elements and the general plot of the com-

¹ Yankovskaya 1968: 306, No. 119, see our **Fig. 1**.

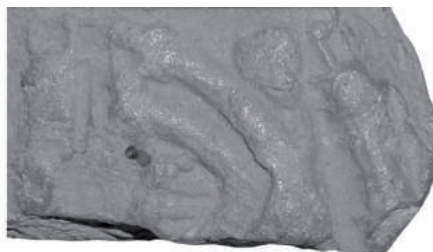
position, although the question of details' number remains open. The artifact's photographs (**Fig. 2, 4 and 5**) were obtained due to a joint project of the Pushkin Museum and CJSC "EPOS Group" aiming to create a digital archive of the cuneiform collection in 2014–2017. We provide here some photographs and drawings of the seal impression.



a



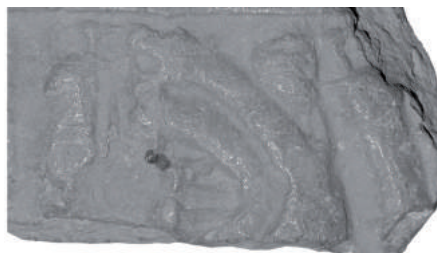
b



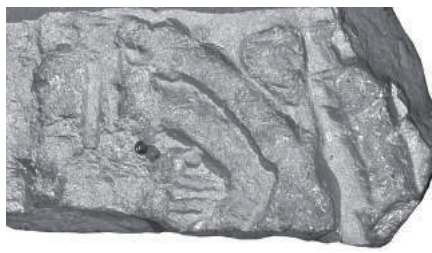
c



d



e



f

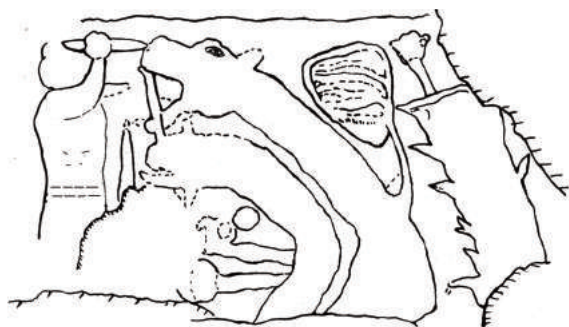


g

Fig. 2, a–g

Seal impression on the clay envelope I 2 b 1591 (a–e, with variations of shooting angle and lighting; f, with contrasting; g, general view). Photos in copyright of authors (see in text).

In **Fig. 2**, we have provided several photographs of the fragment in question taken from different angles and with different lighting,² with the aim of certifying our drawing and interpretations of some of the lines (**Fig. 3, a–c**). For the same purpose, in addition to photographs of the entire impression with magnification (**Fig. 2, a–g**), we also provide additional photographs for some elements of the drawing (**Fig. 4, a–g**). All photographs were collated with the original under magnification. This research method made it possible to make a more accurate drawings (**Fig. 3, a, c**). The image turned out to be very rare in terms of plot and composition.



a

² This seems necessary because different elements of the image are more distinguishable at different angles with different lighting or contrasting.

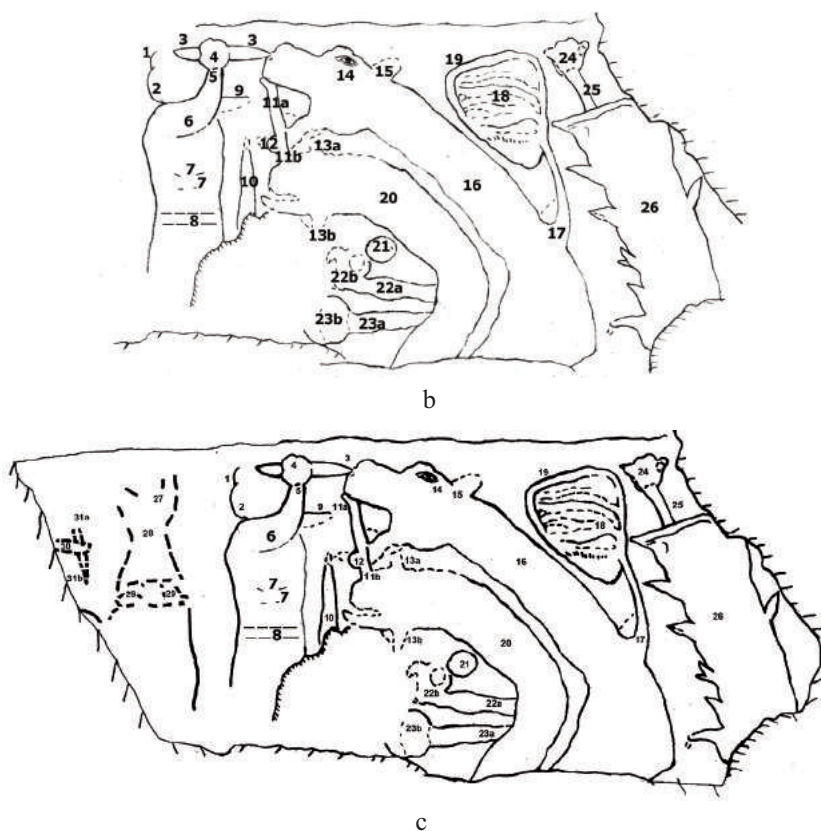
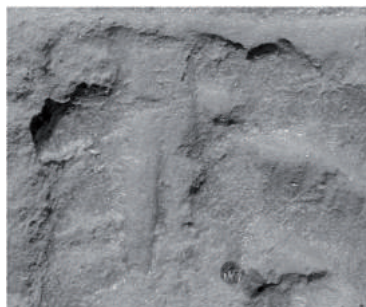


Fig. 3, a-c.

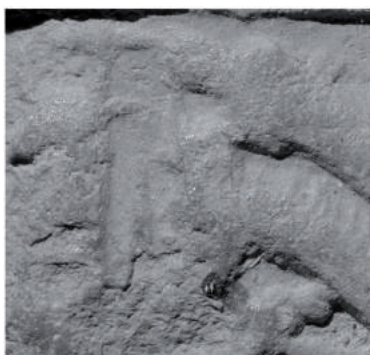
Drawing of the sealing on the envelope I 2 b 1591 and its elements
(a, b, the main part of the seal impression).



a



b



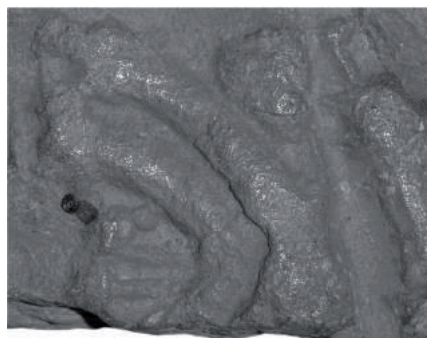
c



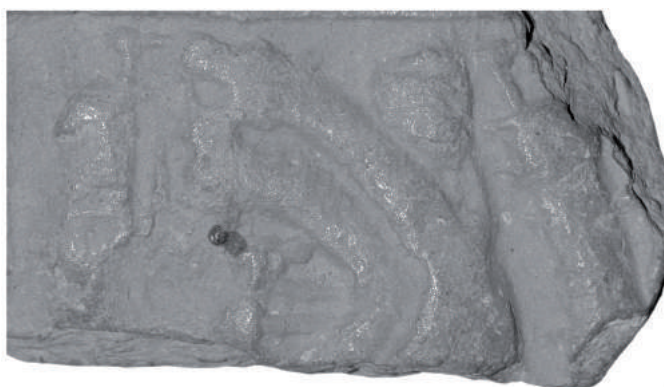
d



e



f



g

Fig. 4, a–g.

Additional photos confirming certain details of our drawing.

Fig. 3 shows our seal's drawing (a, c) with indication of its elements (b, c). The shaded lines show chips and broken zones, while the continuous lines show clearly recognizable details of the composition, and the dashed lines show questionable details.

The problem of the composition's orientation (that is, where to find its top and bottom) is resolved with confidence. This was correctly determined already in 1968, **Fig. 1**. It is clear from the impression's length that it was a cylinder seal; thus, the image can be considered correctly oriented either as shown in **Fig. 2–3**, or rotated by 180 degrees. Since the only well-preserved edge of the image (cf. **Fig. 2, g**) does not seem to serve as a base of the composition (most of the presented figures not only have no points of contact with it, but also have different angles of inclination relative to this edge) it should be considered to be the top edge, and the resulting version of the image's orientation gives the most clear sense for the composition.

The lower, left and right edges of the image are broken off, but most likely almost the entire image is preserved on the unbroken part of the fragment. It can be concluded from the following considerations that: the figure on the left (depicted in full growth), *i.e.* the hero striking with a dagger, is preserved almost entirely, and all other elements of the scene attached to it should have been placed in the same register, without going much lower than it. Furthermore, as the space of this register occupies just the extant part of the fragment, the elements belonging to this register (*i.e.* constituting the whole scene in discussion) filled entirely or almost entirely the preserved part. This means that the whole composition, in all likelihood, could not go significantly out of it and down from the lower chipped edge; thus is preserved in its main part.³

Based on the above remarks, we define the plot of the scene as follows: an anthropomorphic character (left) strikes a blow with a dag-

³ The Ancient Near Eastern seals, in particular, from Kültepe, can carry several scenes, each with several figures (each scene has the register's alignment with the full-length figure of the hero). Therefore, we cannot judge whether there were other registers on the Pushkin Museum's sealing, but we can infer that at least the scene reflected on the extant envelope's fragment is preserved rather fully.

ger to his monstrous serpent-like enemy. On the right, behind the monster's back, there is a depiction of a certain figure, possibly a plant.

Detailed analysis of this composition follows below, but we have to make some remarks on examples taken for comparison with our seal. Such examples represent the Ancient Western Asian iconographic material concerning serpent-like monsters, on the one hand, and snakes as opponents of the protagonist, on the other. As will be seen below, we use for comparison images from different regions of Anatolia and Mesopotamia and from different periods, from 3rd mill. BC to 1st mill. BC (without trying to organize them into chronological and local types). At the same time, we will rarely refer to the Old Assyrian cylinder seals from Kültepe, the original place of our seal, despite the large size of the Kültepe seal corpus. The reader might ask: why are the authors comparing images coming from various periods and localities of the Ancient Near East while Kültepe glyptics themselves occupy such a small place in this comparison? The reason is that images of serpent-like personages which have come down from Ancient Western Asia are so rare that it is necessary for us to compare them with the newly found serpent-like monster image. At the same time, many motives of these images seem to be very stable throughout the whole region to justify such comparisons. For the same reason, the previous researchers of the Ancient Western Asian images of hydras and dragons considered them altogether.⁴

As for the iconography of serpent-like monsters in Kültepe glyptics, none of the types known can be interpreted as parallel to our image. Many Kültepe seals depict two beast-headed monsters with crossed prolonged and curved (*i.e.* serpent-like) necks;⁵ these long-necked monsters are either lion-headed monsters, or a lion-headed monster attacking a goat-headed one. Some seals depict only one lion-headed monster with a long neck.⁶ On the other hand, the Old Assyrian seals

⁴ Bisi 1964–1965; Bellucci 2008.

⁵ Özgüç 2006, CS 366, 532, 553, 610, 761, 783, 809; Özgüç and Tunca 2001, CS 161.

⁶ Özgüç 2006, CS 624, 627, 628, 639, 671.

quite often carry the images of snakes;⁷ however, such seals cannot be regarded as close parallels to our image, because the latter depicts a serpent-like monster, not a snake.

The style of our seal is rather linear but not too schematic; these features are more appropriate for the Old Syrian Colony style of the Kültepe glyptic.⁸ But the Pushkin museum's sealing is lacking another feature of this style, *i.e.*, the drilled anatomic details.⁹ Its composition consists of one (not two!) row of figures without filling motifs; similar Old Syrian seals in Kültepe (like Kt k/k16) belong to the style 2A of A. Erkanal's classification.¹⁰ N. Özgüç considered such seals to be the sub-group with predominantly Syrian traits within the developed Old Syrian style.¹¹ Otto defines the place of origin for this sub-style as Yamhad,¹² but she adds to the features of this sub-group the braided ornament that we cannot observe at I 2 b 1591. The simplicity of figures resembles another sub-group of Old Syrian seals that originate from the vast region covering both Cilicia and Palestine,¹³ but our sealing depicts a less complex scene and has smaller size than most of these seals. Having general features of several Old Syrian sub-styles and matching exactly none of them, I 2 b 1591 is unique in several aspects.

Thus, the material from Kültepe does not present close parallels to our image (except for the probable binarity of its monster: the examples of binarity of various creatures are found, *inter alia*, in Kültepe seals;¹⁴ but in Kültepe such creatures do not belong to the serpentine monsters which seem to be absent in Kültepe material) while the composition in study remains unique in the context of this material. The extra-long curved necks of fantastic creatures from Kültepe seals men-

⁷ For example, Özgüç 2006, CS 295: a snake surrounded by human figures; CS 292: a deity holds a snake in one hand; CS 610.

⁸ Teissier 1984: 69.

⁹ Erkanal 1993: 92–93, 183–184; Teissier 1994: 57.

¹⁰ Erkanal 1993: 93–94, 184.

¹¹ Özgüç 1968: 54.

¹² Otto 2000: 134.

¹³ Otto 2000: 126, 131.

¹⁴ Cf. Ward 1910: 304 (fig. 954), 305 (fig. 956a), 316 (fig. 1000); Porada 1948: CXXXV, fig. 894e; Özgüç 1968: 44; Özgüç 2006: CS 609, CS 621, CS 686, CS 717, CS 806, CS 827.

tioned above can hardly be treated as parallels to our image and be used for comparison. In other cases, the appearance of these creatures has nothing in common with the monster on our sealing; the creatures in question are not even serpent-like, and their long slender necks look completely different and are curved in a different way than the trunk-like and slightly bent body (passing into the neck without any visual border between them) of the monster(s) at the Pushkin Museum's seal. The closest, and still very distant parallels of our image can be seen in the simple snakes presented as antagonists of heroes on some Kültepe seals (as well as on the seals from other territories). These examples, which are also very rare, will be mentioned below. Such a distribution of the available sources suggests that Western Asian items of different time and geographic origin must be used for comparison with our image in a much larger proportion than the items from Old Assyrian Kültepe.

DETAILS OF THE COMPOSITON

Image elements in detail:

- 1—detail of the hero's head or accidental chipping;
- 2—back detail of the hero's head;
- 3—dagger and its handle;
- 4—the hero's fist squeezing the dagger (especially clear and in detail in **Fig. 2**, d–f; **Fig. 4**, b);
- 5—detail of the wrist (?);
- 6—raised hero's hand with the dagger;¹⁵
- 7—chips or details of the hero's clothes (?);
- 8—chip (or detail of clothing or legs, cf. element 29, **Fig. 3**, c?; cf. **Fig. 4**, g);

¹⁵ Normally such position of the hand with a dagger (stretched to the right from the hero's torso, which is also oriented to the right) could mean that this hand is the left one, but some seals from Kültepe [e.g. Özgüç 2006, CS 675, 676, 677] demonstrate that the hand in this position can be the right one as well. This still does not mean that the hero's figure is depicted strictly in profile, which would be uncharacteristic for the relevant material. We assume that our hero's figure is shown in the same partial shift (with the figure's front oriented to the right and the right hand stretched in front of it and to the right as well) as the figures on the just mentioned seals from Kültepe.

- 9—clearly visible element (especially on **Fig. 2**, b, e; **Fig. 4**, b–e), but it can be hardly interpreted (this may be a detail of the hero’s other arm extended forward?);
- 10—another clearly visible element, not amenable to clear interpretation: pointed “sword-shaped” detail, possibly a symbol (**Fig. 2**; **Fig. 4**, a, b). It does not reach element 9;
- 11a–11b—details that merge into one long, straight object which clearly crosses the monster’s mouth 16 (**Fig. 2**, a–f, **Fig. 4**, a, d, f, g), and, apparently, continues even further down against the background of the monster’s lower jaw (or through it), up to the intersection or contact with the element 20 (**Fig. 2**, b, e; **Fig. 4** a, d). Probably, the element 11a+11b can be a dart,¹⁶ although its interpretation as tooth of a monster 16 or as a horn of a monster 20 is not completely excluded. Some similarity to the element 10 is noteworthy;
- 12—detail (**Fig. 2**, a, d, f; **Fig. 4**, a, b, f), which we propose to interpret as the lower jaw’s edge of the monster 16;
- 13a–13b (**Fig. 2**, d, e; **Fig. 4**, g)—elements that do not lend themselves to unambiguous interpretation. Possibly chips or another dart going through the tip of the figure 20;
- 14—seemingly, the eye of the monster 16, distinguishable in a number of photographs (**Fig. 2**, b, c), including after contrasting (**Fig. 5**);

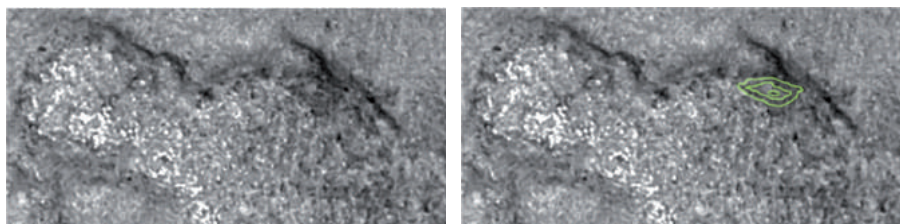


Fig. 5.
Eye of the monster.

¹⁶ Then this dart either (a) pierces the jaw of the monster 16, or (b) is simply shown against the background of this jaw, and hits the figure 20, or (c) pierces the lower jaw of the monster 16,

- 15—occipital protuberance/horn, crest or ear on the head's back of the monster 16 (clearly visible in **Fig. 2**, b, e; **Fig. 4**, c–e, g);
- 16—neck/body of the monster hit by the hero. It has an elongated shape; the monster, apparently, did not have either front or hind legs;
- 17—clearly visible element growing from the body 16 and ending with a clearly distinguishable detail in most of the photographs. Perhaps, this latter detail should be interpreted as the crown of a tree graphically circled with a rim 19 (**Fig. 2**, b–f; **Fig. 4**, e–g), this would mean that some tree grows out from the body of the monster 16¹⁷ (or is it just presented as growing behind of it?);
- 18—branches (?) in the “tree crown” 17, better distinguishable in a number of photographs (**Fig. 2**, d–e; **Fig. 4**, f–g);
- 19—rim outlining the “crown” 17, better distinguishable in a number of photographs (**Fig. 2**, b–f; **Fig. 4**, e–g);
- 20—figure that defies unambiguous interpretation. It is located below and to the left of the neck/torso of the monster (16), resembling this monster in shape—the figure goes and bends in a parallel way to it. From this figure (20) two similar sets of elements (22a+22b and 23a+23b) protrude forward. The figure 20 and the monster body 16 are separated from each other by a narrow curving gap (cf. **Fig. 1**, **Fig. 4**, d, f, g). Unfortunately, the left extremity of the figure 20 is badly damaged, which makes it much more difficult to interpret.¹⁸ Nevertheless, given the position of the figure 20,

and come through it until it touches and hits the figure 20. Is it possible that this dart is held by an outstretched hand and that the element 9 might be identified as a trace of the latter?

¹⁷ Cf. the frequent pictorial motif of plants growing from the shoulders and backs of Mesopotamian fertility deities (Frankfort 1939: 106, 107, 114, 115, 124) and visual combination of a tree with a legless monstrous serpent (with a dragon head vaguely resembling the head of our monster 16) on the seal published in Ward 1910: No. 710, where the serpent seems to grow just out of the tree.

¹⁸ The left extremity of the figure 20 (below the element 11a) is very poorly visible. The dashed lines shown in the drawing could imply that it is a head, if these lines really reflect some figure's cutouts and not occasional chips.

its similarity in shape with the monster's torso/neck ended with the monster's head (16) and parallel bending of the figure 20 to this body/neck 16, we think it is possible to interpret the figure (20) as either the second serpent, or as the second head and neck of a two-headed monster (16+20); in such a case the damaged left extremity of the element 20 might be the head. If this is a two-headed monster, then elements 16 and 20 should have been connected like its two necks/torsos slightly below the edge of the lower chip, like two trunks with one root. The elements 22 and 23 are most likely the forward paws of the serpent-like creature represented by the figure 20 (that is, either a separate serpent-like monster if the figure 16 belongs to another creature, or a two-headed monster 16+20 if the figures 16 and 20 belong to the same creature and represent its necks). Note that the forward paws of a serpent/dragon without hind legs is a common feature of one of the types of the Western Asian (and specifically Mesopotamian) dragon iconography (primarily of the Mesopotamian serpent *bašmu*), which, by the way, is also characterized by a protrusion on the back of the head (horns),¹⁹ similar to our element 15. There are quite similar extended paws, apparently, at the representation of the serpent smashed by the hero on the famous Neo-Hittite relief from Malatya (this serpent also has no hind legs, see below). Malatya lies in the same South-Eastern part of Asia Minor as Kanish-Kültepe.

The choice between the two above interpretations (two serpent-like monsters or one two-headed serpent-like monster) cannot be made with full certainty, but a number of considerations speak in favor of the second option. Firstly, if we assume that two monsters are depicted here, it would turn out that, despite of their high general similarity and

¹⁹ See, for example, the images of dragons (most likely *bašmu*) on the Neo-Assyrian seals BM 89589 (Ward 1910: No. 579 = Collon 2005: fig. 850) and AO 30255 (Louvre), where there are paws extended forward and a protruding element at the back of the head (horns).

parallelism in form, posture and location, they are depicted, nevertheless, so different that one of them (20) has the paw-like limbs (22 and 23), while the other (16) has not such limbs, but on the other hand the latter creature (16) has the tree-like element 17 growing from its back, which, in turn, is absent from the other creature. It seems more likely that this is a one two-headed serpent, with both body parts and elements 22, 23 (paws) and 17 attached.

Secondly, the two-headedness of various characters was generally a fairly widespread motif in the Ancient Near East and, in particular, in the Syro-Anatolian art,²⁰ including seals from Kültepe; meanwhile, the Old Akkadian seal VA 3303²¹ shows a two-headed snake (and the Mesopotamian seal of the Early Dynastic time BM 123279²² shows a three-headed snake captured by the hero).

Thirdly, the Neo-Hittite relief H from Malatya (AMM 12250) dated to the early 12th century BC²³ seems to depict a two-headed serpent without hind legs with two parallel paws extended forward (and holding weapons?, see **Fig. 6**²⁴), which would constitute a good Anatolian example, in the light of which we could similarly interpret our image from the Pushkin Museum. However, the place of interest to

²⁰ Collon 1982: 41

²¹ van Buren 1946: fig. 5

²² Amiet 1961: pl. 105, fig. 1389.

²³ Gilibert 2015: 143–144.

²⁴ On the relief, a hero fights a huge serpent without hind legs. A number of authors believe that this serpent is two-headed (van Loon 1997: 589; Boardman 1998: 32; Bellucci 2008: 149). And, indeed, upon a detailed examination of the relief from the best photographs, primarily from the publication of L. Delaporte (Delaporte 1940: pl. XXII, our fig. 6), it seems that the serpent is two-headed (both necks are shown to the right of the large fissure that damages the relief) and protrudes forward paws-like limbs with weapons (?) (shown to the left of the fissure and touching the hero's skirt), cf. our drawing of this part of the relief in **Fig. 6**. Two supposedly visible "offshoots" from the serpent's body, both of them to the right of the fissure, and an element or elements which the same serpent extends in front of it to the left of the fissure may represent a parallel, correspondingly, to two serpent-like figures 16 and 20 and elements 22+23 extended in front of one of them in our seal impression. However, the relevant part of the relief from Malatya is heavily damaged by the aforementioned fissure. This prevents from being indisputably sure at present moment that the depicted monster is really two-headed and/or protrudes forward its forepaws.

us on the Malatya relief is very badly damaged by a fissure, so it cannot be stated indisputably that this serpent was two-headed.

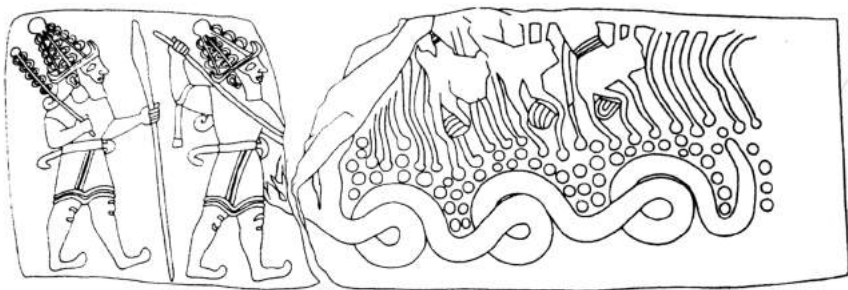


Fig. 6.

Drawing of Neo-Hittite relief from Malatya
(upon photograph in: Delaporte 1940: Pl. XXII, Relief H).

Looking back at the list of image elements:

21—clearly delineated circle;

22–23—details with left extremities are unfortunately located in the damaged area which extends up to the chip that covers the lower part of the hero's figure on the left and the lower part of the element 10. These lines cannot be interpreted with full certainty, but, as mentioned above, they look like paws growing from the figure 20; this interpretation may be confirmed by the Ancient Near Eastern iconography of dragons/serpents with the paws thrust forward in the same way²⁵ the elements 22–23 closely resemble these paws;

24, 25, 26—perfectly visible lines constituting a single object, which, however, presents a great difficulty for interpretation (especially since the lower part of this figure is chipped off). On the one hand, the general outlines of this figure are somehow mirror symmetrical (up to some degree) to the general outlines of the left figure (the hero), and the elements 6+5+4 of the left figure are also made in a certain

²⁵ Cf. Neo-Assyrian seals BM 89589 (Ward 1910: No 579 = Collon 2005, fig. 850) and AO 30255, Louvre 33.

symmetry with the elements 25+24 of the figure in question, as well as the protruding element 9 of the left figure and the upper left projection of the element 26. Such symmetry can hardly be accidental. Obviously, the carver at least wanted to approach a mirror-symmetrical composition with figures similar in silhouette at its edges (with the monster between them). One might then suspect that these symmetrical figures represent some objects of similar nature. However, upon examination, it turns out that the symmetry of the hero's figure and the figure 24+25+26 is far from complete: a number of significant differences exist between them. This cannot be the result of natural variations and deviations when one and the same object is carved on the seal repeatedly. The logical conclusion is that these figures are different and represent different objects, and the carver just wanted to make their silhouettes similar to each other in order to get a symmetrical composition if possible.

What then does the figure 24+25+26 represent? A number of considerations might support its identification as a sacred tree. The element 24 resembles in its general outlines a petal corolla²⁶ growing on a stem (25) from a trunk-like base (26) which has bough-like protrusions. All of this can be compared with images of the sacred tree—an exceptionally frequent element of the Near Eastern seals and reliefs (**Fig. 7**). Though we did not find a precise parallel to our figure 24+25+26, having looked at several thousands of the Near Eastern images of trees, we have to keep in mind that the Ancient Near Eastern iconography of the tree is characterised by exceptional diversity and variability, even within a group of objects of one and the same time and place of origin²⁷ (including very rare and unique specimens).²⁸ At the same time, both all

²⁶ The “petalled” segmental structure of the upper part of the element 24 is clearly visible in **Fig. 2**, b, d, and **Fig. 4**, a, g.

²⁷ See Van Buren 1945: 27; York 1975; Parpola 1993: 163 and some summary representations of various examples of the sacred tree images (York 1975: 272; Collon 1982: 11).

²⁸ Cf. the general structure of the typical sacred tree images: a flowering (rarely leaf-like) top

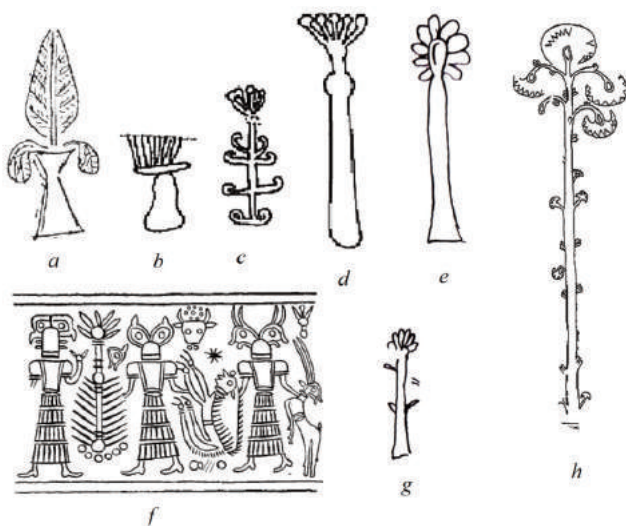
the details of our figure 24+25+26 taken separately, and its structure as a whole, find parallels in the existing images of the “sacred tree”; only a specific combination of elements in our figure and their dimensional ratio seem unique within the sacred tree iconography, but some known images of the “sacred tree” display not lesser particularities. The representation of “sacred tree” as a two-part structure, consisting of a “flower-like” top, similar to a multi-petalled object, growing from a columnar trunk (more or less clearly separated from the top part, in particular by a horizontal line) which has boughs or short branches is one of the most common types in the Western Asian art for centuries²⁹ (see **Fig. 7**³⁰), and that is exactly what our right figure looks like.

Yet, a serious counterargument to the identification of our right figure as a “sacred tree” is that the element 26 (“trunk”) is much wider than element 24 (“top/crown”). We did not find any parallels for such a ratio; on the contrary, the width of the sacred tree’s top turns out to be greater than the width of the trunk (although sometimes an almost equal width is observed, for example, **Fig. 7**, a). If, however, this single element excludes the correlation of our figure with a sacred tree, given that the images of trees are infinitely variable, and the noted disproportionality of our right figure, be it a “sacred tree,” could also be simply the result of the very desire to bring it closer in general outlines (for symmetry’s sake) to the silhouette of the left figure, which was independently identified above?

and a clearly separated trunk: York 1975: 272, fig. 9; Collon 1982: No. 71, No. 108; Osten 1934: No. 359; columnar trunk with boughs or branches (including short and asymmetrically spaced ones): Collon 1982: No. 108; Osten 1934: No. 359; Eisen 1940: No. 99; Black, Green 1992: 23, fig. 16; massive trunk—York 1975: fig. 9; Collon 1982: No. 71, No. 112; stem-like connection of top and trunk—Collon 1982: No. 112; top of the tree as a single multi-petal corolla—Eisen 1940: No. 98, comes close to this Collon 1982: No. 108, No. 112.

²⁹ Cf. York 1975: fig.9; Collon 1982: No. 71, No. 108, No. 112; Eisen 1940: No. 98, No. 99; Osten 1934: No. 359 = Ward 1910: No. 956a/1000; Osten 1934: 8; Black, Green 1992: 23, fig. 16.

³⁰ General structure of the image: flower-like (rarely leaf-like) top + clearly separated trunk—fig. 7, a (up to leaves hanging to the sides), b, c, f; columnar trunk with boughs/branches (including short and asymmetrical ones)—fig. 7, c, f, g, h; the massiveness of the trunk—fig. 7, a, b, d; stem-like connection of the top and the trunk—fig. 7, d; a clear horizontal element separating the trunk from the top—fig. 7, b, f; top part as a single multi-petal corolla—fig. 7, e, close to this are c, d. Fig. 7, d and c are the closest to the figure 24+25+26 in our seal.

**Fig. 7.**

Some Ancient Near Eastern images of trees. “Sacred tree”: a—on the Ur-Nammu stele (Sumer, c. 2100 BC), see York 1975: fig.9; b, c, d—on seals from Alalakh IV (15–14th centuries BC), see Collon 1982: No. 71, No. 108, No. 112; e, g—on the Neo-Babylonian seals (Eisen 1940: No. 98, No. 99), f—on the “Syro-Hittite” seal of the Cypriot style (Osten 1934: No. 359 = Ward 1910: No. 956a/1000), approx. the end of the 2nd millennium BC (see Osten 1934: 8); the tree on a fresco from Mari (18th century BC)—h (after Black, Green 1992: 23, fig. 16).

It should be noted that the sacred tree hardly appears on the seals originating from Kültepe. This fact can serve as one more argument against the version in question. In addition, one of the seals from Kültepe³¹ presents a pillar-like object (in the publication, this element is also not clear; however, Özgüç suggested that it could be interpreted as a door or a temple), which is somewhat reminiscent of the figure 24+25+26 from the Pushkin Museum’s sealing.

On the whole, while recognizing the possibility of seeing here a sacred tree unusual in proportions or some architectural element, we do not consider it permissible to express any opinion on this point with certainty. Until closer parallels are found, the question of the reliable

³¹ Özgüç 2006, CS 352.

identification of this figure remains open. However, this does not affect the definition of the general plot of the preserved scene.

27—31: possibly, unclear traces of two other figures of heroes(?)
 (?): 27—hands of the second left figure raised to the top, probably in a pose of preparation for striking, similar to the position of the hand 6; 28—body of an anthropomorphic figure; 29—legs of an anthropomorphic figure; 30—hand gripping a dagger or a dart; 31—dagger or dart, a weapon similar to 3? There is no confidence in the interpretation of these traces.

CONCLUSIONS

The plot of the main scene can now be clarified in greater detail—it is undoubtedly the scene of fighting with a serpent. An anthropomorphic character (hero or god), standing on the left, is fighting with a two-headed serpent-like monster (**Fig. 3 b**, 16+20—or yet two single-headed monsters?) which protrudes its paws in the direction of the fighter. The fighter (1, 2—head, 4—fist squeezing a dagger, 5—wrist (?), 6—body and raised hand with a dagger, 7—lines on clothes (?), 8—lines on clothes or legs (?), 9—clearly prominent element, possibly a fragment of the outline of the hero's other arm extended forward) strikes his opponent (a serpent-like torso 16—we can recognize an eye 14, a protrusion (horn) or an ear on the head's back 15, and possibly—the edge of his lower jaw, 12). The hero hits the front of one of the monster's heads with a dagger; apparently, he also struck with a weapon similar to a dart, either the same head in the mouth, or the second head in its front part, or both these objects at once. From the neck/body of the two-headed monster (or one of two one-headed monsters) the plant-like element 17 grows (see note 17), encircled with the rim 19. Within it, lines 18 resembling branches are slightly distinguishable without certainty. This may have something in common with the fact that the very shape of the snake-like monster's body 16 resembles a trunk.

The hero is separated by his antagonist (or two antagonists) from the object (24+25+26) where one can see the “sacred tree” without full certainty. In this case, the antagonist (or a pair of antagonists) of the hero seems to block this object from the hero and his path to it. Such a composition allows us to assume (albeit, again, without certainty) that the hero fights the monster(s) precisely in order to pave his way to this object (conditionally, the “tree”). However, this interpretation is significantly hampered by the fact that the “trunk” of the “tree” (26) is much wider than its “flower-shaped crown” (24), and we have not found images of the tree with such a ratio of the lower and upper elements among many hundreds of examples. A number of image’s elements still remain unclear. On the left, broken off edge of the image, the remains of two more anthropomorphic figures seem to be visible (first: 28—torso, 29—legs, 27—raised arms; a possible remnant of the second, extreme figure: 30—a hand clutching a dagger or a dart 31 (?)). We dare not to determine their role at present.

We emphasize that the differences noted above between the snake-like figures 16 and 20 (the first one has the element 17 growing from its body, the second one has elements 22+23, which resemble paws of the Near Eastern dragons) support the idea that the figures 16 and 20 are two parts (necks/torsos) of one and the same creature.

The serpent-fighting plot revealed on the seal gives a special value to the little artifact under study and makes it a significant rarity, since scenes of fighting with serpent-like monsters were present in the Mesopotamian and Syro-Anatolian areas,³² but only few of them have been preserved, and among them scenes of fighting with legless serpent-like monsters are especially rare in the Near Eastern figurative inventory.³³ And if we are talking specifically about a two-headed ser-

³² On the Ancient Near Eastern images of multi-headed serpents (“hydras”) and scenes of fighting them from the 3rd–1st millennia BC see, in particular, Frankfort 1934; Levy 1934: 49–50; Frankfort 1935: 105–108; Frankfort 1939: 71–72, 121–122; van Buren 1946: 18–20; Bisi 1964–1965; Orthmann 1975: 537; Parayre 2003: 276, 294; Amiet 2006.

³³ Let us note vivid, but few examples of different times (given in descending order of chronological and territorial proximity to our sealing): one Syro-Anatolian seal of the 2nd millennium where the hero—the Storm God—strikes with a dart (just at the mouth) a snake next to a tree

pent-like character (according to the generally accepted terminology, it would be considered one of the varieties of “hydra”), then the image we are examining turns out to be even more rare, since although the images of “hydras” in the art of Mesopotamia, Anatolia and Syria are firmly fixed starting from the Early Dynastic period, still less than a dozen of such images (including hydras with legs) have come down to us and are noted in the literature.³⁴ In both cases—whether we are talking about two monsters or a two-headed monster—our artifact belongs to a relatively very small number of seals from Kültepe, characterized by highly original plots and pictorial elements, not repeated constantly on other seals (the overwhelming majority of seals from Kültepe bear, on the contrary, imagery which is massively repeated on other seals from the same center and region, in different combinations).³⁵ Among the

(Eisen 1940: 158)—a parallel to our image in several points at once; on another similar seal, the hero with a spear attacks a snake (Eisen 1940: No. 159); in yet another seal, the hero standing before the deity carries in his hand two captured snakes (Ward 1910: No. 823); Neo-Assyrian seals with a scene of archer and the *bašmu* serpent (horned and legless) (e.g., Frankfort 1939: Pl. XXXIV, g); several Sumerian-Akkadian images of the second half of the 3rd millennium BC (plaque, Green 1997: 155, fig. 13; print, Frankfort 1939: 72, ill. 27 = van Buren 1946: fig. 16 = Frankfort 1955: No. 497; print, Frankfort 1939: Pl. XXIII j = van Buren 1946: fig. 17 = Frankfort 1955: No. 478) where the hero fights a seven-headed hydra—possibly representations of the plot of the fight with the seven-headed snake *mušmahhu*; iconography of these scenes is quite stable, although the monster can be four-legged or legless (moreover, the parallelism of shape and bending of these hydras’ necks resembles the parallelism of shape and bending of the elements [necks/bodies] 16 and 20 at our seal impression. On one of these examples (Frankfort 1955: No. 497) the hero hits a legless hydra in the front part of one of the heads, similarly to our image. On another Sumerian-Akkadian seal of the 3rd millennium BC the hero holds in his hand a defeated three-headed snake (BM 123279 = Amiet 1961: Pl. 105, fig. 1389). For the relief from Malatya, see above, note 24.

³⁴ Frankfort 1934: 8–11, 22–24; Levy 1934: 49–50; Frankfort 1935: 105–108; Frankfort 1939: 71–72, 121–122; van Buren 1946: 18–20; Bisi 1964–1965; Orthmann 1975; Parayre 2003: 276, 294–295; Amiet 2006.

³⁵ Seals and sealings from Kültepe were published primarily in: Contenau 1922; Özgüç 1965, 1968, 2006; Özgüç and Tunca 2001; Teissier 1994. Seal impressions are also found on tablets, editions of which are catalogued in Michel 2003. This corpus covers just under two thousand seals (Palmisano 2018: 73 counts 1615 sealings found in the course of regular excavations) and is representative despite the fact that most of the approximately 23,500 tablets found at Kültepe remain unpublished, because many seal impressions were published prior to the publication of the tablets etc. containing them (Lassen 2014: 117).

Kültepe seals, despite the variety of plots, those with snakes or serpent-like creatures taking part in the scene are also quite rare. The main plots of such compositions (besides the aforementioned ones) are the eagle pecking the snake;³⁶ the Storm God capturing a snake in his hand;³⁷ a snake crawling on the ground;³⁸ snake as a space filler.³⁹ The sealing from the Pushkin Museum is thus rather unique for Kültepe, since it is not a snake that appears on it in the snake-struggling context, but a serpent-like monster, and its antagonist is an anthropomorphic figure, not an eagle.

It may seem paradoxical that within the great quantity of seals from Kültepe, no analogues can be found of this image (except for the ones of the most distant circle, *i.e.* where usual snakes figure as antagonists of the hero, and even these distant analogies from Kültepe are rare). It is also strange that the closest analogies belong for the most part to other times and regions of the Western Asia. However, this can be explained by two reasons: the extreme rarity of serpentine monsters' images that have come down from the Ancient Western Asia in general, and the unique particularities of the studied seal in the context of the Kültepe material, that only increases its interest.

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³⁶ Özgüç 1965: Pl. XXV, No. 76.

³⁷ Özgüç 1965: Pl. XI, No. 31.

³⁸ Özgüç 1965: Pl. XXI, No. 64.

³⁹ Özgüç 1965: pl. XVIII, No. 54; Pl. XXVI, No. 77.

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ASPECTOS DEL TRIBALISMO POLÍTICO EN EL LEVANTE MERIDIONAL DURANTE LA EDAD DEL BRONCE TARDÍO*

EMANUEL PFOH

epfoh@conicet.gov.ar

CONICET / Universidad Nacional de La Plata

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Summary: Aspects of Tribal Politics in the Southern Levant during the Late Bronze Age

Can the politics of the Canaanite kings in their small urban centers, as reflected in the Amarna letters (mid-fourteenth cent. BCE), be called to some extent tribal? Beyond the (now old) anthropological discussion about “what is a tribe?,” can we see tribalism as a main factor in the Southern Levant’s politics? If we attend to the political scene of the Late Bronze Age (*ca.* 1550–1200 BCE), many of the activities of the local socio-political actors—even those settled and with an urban political life—do indeed match the rationale and expectations found in tribal situations and relationships, as documented in the modern ethnographic record of the Middle East: alliances and coalitions, personal subordination, political reciprocity, etc. The key matter in this interpretation is to transcend monolithic models like “tribe” or “city-state” and focus instead on the nature of the evidenced political practice, namely what the main actors do and how they behave to gain influence and prestige and to exert power and control over other political actors. In that way, there would be no need for expecting a mandatory presence of proper tribes in order to find tribal politics in action. This paper assesses the data in the Amarna archive from this perspective, noting the relevance of kinship, patrimonial structures and patron-client relationships in order to understand how local political communities were related to and interacted with the great powers of the period (particularly Egypt) which intervened in the land.

Keywords: Southern Levant – Late Bronze Age – Amarna letters – Tribe – Politics – Patronage

Artículo recibido: 23 de abril de 2020; aprobado: 9 de junio de 2020.

* Una primera versión de este trabajo apareció en inglés como “Tribal Politics (without Tribes?) in the Southern Levant during the Late Bronze Age”, *Oriens Antiquus-Serie Nova* 1 (2019), pp. 135–140. Se presenta aquí revisado y expandido. Agradezco a la Agencia Nacional de Promoción Científica y Tecnológica por financiar el proyecto PICT 2016–1269, el cual dirijo, que hizo posible esta investigación.

Resumen: Aspectos del tribalismo político en el Levante meridional durante la Edad del Bronce Tardío

¿Puede la actividad política de los reyes cananeos en sus pequeños centros urbanos, como se refleja en las cartas de El Amarna (siglo XIV a.n.e.), ser llamada en cierta medida tribal? Más allá de la (ahora vieja) discusión antropológica sobre “qué es una tribu”, ¿podemos percibir al tribalismo como un factor clave en la política del Levante meridional? Centrándonos en la escena política regional de la Edad del Bronce Tardío (*ca.* 1550–1200 a.n.e.), es posible afirmar que muchas de las actividades de los actores sociopolíticos locales—inclusive aquellos ubicados en ámbitos urbanos—en efecto coinciden con las lógicas y las expectativas halladas en situaciones tribales, tal como se documenta el registro etnográfico de Medio Oriente: alianzas y coaliciones, subordinación personal, reciprocidad política, etc. La cuestión de importancia en esta interpretación es lograr trascender los modelos monolíticos como “tribu” o “ciudad-Estado” y, en cambio, focalizar el análisis en la naturaleza de la práctica política evidenciada, vale decir, lo que los actores principales hacen y cómo se comportan para obtener influencia y prestigio y, también, para ganar poder y control sobre otros actores políticos. En dicho sentido, no habría razón de esperar una presencia necesaria de tribus para hallar también una política tribal en acción. Este trabajo aborda la información disponible en el archivo de El Amarna desde esta perspectiva, subrayando la relevancia del parentesco, las estructuras patrimoniales y las relaciones patrón-cliente para comprender la manera en que las comunidades políticas locales interactuaban con los grandes poderes del período (en especial, Egipto) que intervenían en la región.

Palabras clave: Levante meridional – Edad del Bronce Tardío – Cartas de El Amarna – Tribu – Política – Patronazgo

TRIBUS Y TRIBALISMO EN LA ANTROPOLOGÍA SOCIAL Y CULTURAL

Al menos desde la década de 1960, la noción de “tribu” ha sido revisada, discutida e inclusive descartada en los estudios políticos de la antropología social. Desde entonces, el referente de dicho término ha variado en la literatura antropológica, apuntando algunas veces a un modo de delimitar un tipo de organización genealógica o de descendencia—especialmente para la ecúmene árabe—, otras veces a un modo de organización política y territorial, y otras simplemente a nómades pastoralistas o a beduinos en un sentido general y poco definido¹. Ante estas

¹ Cf. Tapper 1990: 52–57; 2009.

definiciones variantes, uno podría preguntarse, en efecto, si dicha noción posee aún algún tipo de valor analítico, en especial a la luz de la crítica ejercida sobre construcciones antropológicas como “organización tribal” o “tribalismo” a partir de los procesos globales de descolonización, particularmente en el continente africano². En dicho sentido, A. Mafeje³, refiriéndose a la situación en África—aunque algo similar podría afirmarse si tenemos en cuenta la etnografía del así llamado Medio Oriente—indica: “In many instances the colonial authorities helped to create the things called ‘tribes’, in the sense of political communities; this process coincided with and was helped along by the anthropologists’ preoccupation with ‘tribes’”⁴. Más aún, T. Dogde⁵, aludiendo al retraso que connotaba dicha terminología en el Irak ocupado por los británicos entre 1914 y 1932, observa: “For British administrators ‘tribal’ and ‘rural’ were most frequently collapsed into one category. The tribal nature of the rural population was the first and dominant category of understanding”⁶.

No obstante estas observaciones, se podría argumentar que, si bien el valor conceptual y analítico de la noción de “tribu” en términos de una particular organización social depende más de una perspectiva *etic* que de una *emic*, la noción delimitada y operativa del concepto de “política tribal” podría encontrar una ganancia interpretativa particular cuando se evalúan las prácticas políticas de sociedades no estatales o proto-estatales⁷. En efecto, si entendemos a la organización tribal como

² Cf. Mair 1963: 25–26; Helm 1968.

³ Mafeje 1971: 254.

⁴ Cf. Schapera 1956: 203; Godelier 2004: 291.

⁵ Dodge 2003: 262.

⁶ Que las tribus u organizaciones tribales pueden tener segmentos rurales, nomádicos y hasta urbanos, es un hecho etnográficamente aceptado hoy en día; cf. Lemche 1985: 84–244, con abundante bibliografía relevante; Fleming 2009 (sobre el reino de Mari); Whitcomb 2009 (sobre el temprano estado islámico en Siria); Reculeau 2016: 177–186 (sobre la Alta Mesopotamia). También, la vieja (y supuestamente necesaria) confusión entre “tribu” y “grupo étnico” está, por supuesto, actualmente descartada por la gran mayoría de los antropólogos, que problematizan ambos conceptos; cf. por ejemplo Banks 1996: 24–37; Fabietti 2013: 61–73.

⁷ Aquí debemos, asimismo, distanciarnos de concepciones neo-evolucionistas que entienden a las “sociedades tribales” como un estadio primitivo y necesariamente anterior a las sociedades más complejas (estatales), como argumenta, por ejemplo, Service (1962). Curiosamente, M.

una articulación de lazos jerárquicos de parentesco—en el sentido de que existen linajes principales y secundarios—que estructuran la mayoría, si no todos, los aspectos de la vida social—independientemente de si tratamos con campesinos, nómades o urbanitas⁸—sería igualmente válido percibir la política desarrollada dentro, aunque también hacia afuera, de esa comunidad efectivamente como “tribal”, en gran medida. En otras palabras, depende de la dinámica social aceptada como tribal, aun cuando lo tribal descansa más, pues, en una ideología socialmente compartida por los individuos que en un hecho biológico o genealógico⁹. Así pues, la alianza y la reciprocidad se consideran elementos propios de la política tribal, manifestadas a través de relaciones de parentesco “ficticio” (distinción que, en términos performativos, resulta irrelevante), vale decir, el lenguaje de la hermandad¹⁰, de la pertenencia a un mismo ámbito doméstico (*household*) o linaje, o de una subordinación individual en términos de relaciones de tipo patrón-cliente. Al respecto de este último punto, cuando el cliente es integrado en el ámbito doméstico del patrón—digamos, en “su casa”¹¹—como

Fried, un promotor del neo-evolucionismo antropológico (véase Fried 1967), no aceptaba esta percepción: “I do not believe that there is theoretical need for a tribal stage in the evolution of political organization” (Fried 1966: 539). Véase más al respecto de estas cuestiones en Testart 2005: 81–134.

⁸ Cf. Kressel 1996: 129–31; Fabietti 1996: 459.

⁹ Cf. Conte 2001. En verdad, como también indica Schloen (2001: 71): “As many ethnographers have noted, actual blood relationship, in the Middle East and elsewhere, is less important than the substantive relationships of friendship or dependence that exist among persons who construe their closeness in terms of kinship. On the broader levels of corporate social action (the ‘clan’ or ‘tribe’), in particular, the facts of genealogy are beside the point—common descent is assumed to exist among those who cooperate”.

¹⁰ Para ejemplos al respecto, durante la Edad del Bronce Tardío, cf. Liverani 2014: 240–259; Charpin 2019: 47–167.

¹¹ Remitimos aquí al concepto de *sociétés à maison*, análogo al de *household* y acuñado por Claude Lévi-Strauss, según quién se refiere con este concepto a: “...un domaine composé à la fois de biens matériels et immatériels, qui se perpétue par la transmission de son nom, de sa fortune et de ses titres en ligne réelle ou fictive, tenue pour légitime à la seule condition que cette continuité puisse s’exprimer dans le langage de la parenté ou de l’alliance, et, le plus souvent, des deux ensemble” (Lévi-Strauss 2008 [1979]: 1000). En este respecto, cf. la discusión general en Schloen 2001: *passim*; y para Ugarit en Hawley 2010. Véase también, para un caso contemporáneo de organización política de tipo *maison* o *household* en Jordania, Shryock 2001.

una suerte de afiliado tribal, en el sentido de que él (usualmente es un “él”) se encuentra políticamente subordinado a una autoridad superior, también goza de una expectativa de protección social de parte de la tribu, de la *household*, o de la comunidad política a la que ahora pertenece¹². Más aún, en ciertas situaciones, las relaciones patrón-cliente pueden terminar reemplazando a las afiliaciones de parentesco o tribales, o entretorsejarse con ellas aunque de modo dominante¹³.

Es relevante notar que la vinculación piramidal entre díadas de patrones y clientes es un hecho sociológico ampliamente atestiguado en la historia del Medio Oriente desde los inicios del propio Islam (y anteriormente también) hasta la actualidad, vinculando de diversos modos a imperios, gobernantes locales y campesinos o pastoralistas¹⁴. Pero también, afirmamos aquí, muchas de estas características, prácticas y relaciones se encuentran presentes en las sociedades del Levante durante el segundo milenio a.n.e., expresadas en el registro textual del período, en particular la epistolografía de El Amarna referente a la comunicación entre el faraón egipcio y sus súbditos políticos en Siria-

¹² Véase Ibn Khaldun (1958 [1377]) para un análisis de esta situación en el siglo XIV n.e., dentro de su esquema mayor de evolución política desde el nomadismo al urbanismo (para una interpretación de la sociología política de Ibn Khaldun, véase, por ejemplo, Cheddadi 1980). Más aún, cf. el análisis de situaciones antiguas en Szuchman 2009; y de ejemplos más modernos en Khoury y Kostiner 1990a; Fabietti y Salzman 1996; Bonte, Conte y Dresch 2001; Jabar y Dawod 2003; Dawod 2004; van der Steen 2013. Como se evidencia en estos estudios, la noción de tribu/tribalismo/sociedad tribal es todavía ampliamente utilizada en los estudios antropológicos/etnográficos contemporáneos del Medio Oriente; tal vez la razón se deba a algo que señala Alon (2007: 7): “For decades tribalism was thought of as a dying phenomenon retreating before the sweeping forces of modernity while trying to delay their positive progress. The post-colonial nation-state was expected to erode tribal forms of identity and social and political organisation. Contrary to these predictions, tribes have not only survived modernity and statehood but in some ways also enjoyed a revival. In Jordan, as well as several other Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries, tribal values and social organisation have proved to be the allies of the modern state, not its rivals. This is true not only for the formative period but to a certain extent even in the present”.

¹³ Cf. Black 1972; Bradburd 1980.

¹⁴ En general, cf. Leca y Schemeil 1983; también Gellner y Waterbury 1977; y los ejemplos recientes en Ruiz de Elvira, Schwartz y Weipert-Fenner 2018. Dos situaciones históricas que abren la comparación analítica: para el período abásida, cf. Nawas 2014; para el territorio jordano a comienzos del siglo XX, cf. Alon 2007.

Palestina¹⁵. Debemos notar también que estas características tribales no son privativas de elementos nómades, pastoralistas o campesinos: en efecto, *proponemos ver a toda la cultura política del Levante meridional antiguo imbuida, en mayor o menor grado, en relaciones propias de aquello que la antropología ha nominado como “tribal”*. A estos efectos, la etnografía del Medio Oriente contemporáneo nos podría proveer de algunas pistas interpretativas para comprender las lógicas tribales en práctica en dicho registro textual. Las siguientes secciones avanzan una caracterización analítica del dominio extranjero sobre este territorio, sobre las organizaciones políticas locales en él, y sobre la interacción entre ambas partes.

ARTICULACIONES SOCIOPOLÍTICAS

Si intentamos hacer una síntesis de la situación política regional en el Levante durante la segunda mitad del segundo milenio a.n.e., a partir del marco general de “internacionalismo” con el que suele caracterizarse a la Edad del Bronce Tardío¹⁶ (ca. 1550–1200 a.n.e.), se podría sostener un esquema de análisis del paisaje sociopolítico en dos grandes niveles (uno *macropolítico* o regional, y otro *micropolítico* o local) y dos direcciones (desde arriba hacia abajo, y desde abajo hacia arriba), todas ellas en intersección en distintos momentos.

En el nivel macropolítico o regional, debemos contemplar la presencia de los grandes poderes del período (Egipto, Mittani y Ḫatti) ejerciendo dominio sobre toda la región de Siria-Palestina: en el Levante septentrional, Mittani mantuvo una hegemonía política durante el siglo XV y la primera mitad del siglo XIV a.n.e., reemplazada luego por la presencia de Ḫatti desde mediados del siglo XIV en adelante. En el Levante meridional, Egipto dominó sobre los pequeños líderes locales desde el siglo XV hasta mediados del siglo XII a.n.e. Ambos territorios eran gestionados a partir de modos diferenciados de sujeción política: en el Levante septentrional, Mittani y Ḫatti goberna-

¹⁵ Pfoh 2016.

¹⁶ Liverani 2001; Bryce 2003; cf. Pfoh 2016: 13–62.

ban a través de alianzas políticas personales con los reyes sirios subordinados, una relación usualmente referida como de “vasallaje”, aludiéndose asimismo a una suerte de relación “feudal” (inclusive para el dominio egipcio en Canaán¹⁷), pero que en ambas instancias podría ser mejor concebido, y sus características mejor explicadas, a partir del modelo de relaciones patrón-cliente entre dominante y dominado¹⁸. En el Levante meridional, Egipto había dispuesto tres centros de administración distrital (aunque eventualmente se duplicaron) con comisionados en cada uno de ellos supervisando a los pequeños reyes locales (considerados por los egipcios como *ḥazannūtu*, un término que podría traducirse del acadio como “alcaldes”, y que define mejor su alcance operativo) en un sentido propiamente burocrático¹⁹. Este modo de dominio regional, en ambas regiones, bien puede ser entendido como el ejercicio de la política desde arriba²⁰ sobre las comunidades políticas o reinos locales, los cuales interactuaban, si bien desde una posición considerablemente asimétrica, con los poderes regionales, o mejor dicho, con sus representantes directos (oficiales, tropas, mensajeros /embajadores²¹).

En el nivel micropolítico o local, encontramos la performance política que emanaba de cada pequeño reino o comunidad política, de los cuales tenemos noticias directas e indirectas especialmente en el archivo epistolar de El Amarna, datado hacia 1350 a.n.e.²². De esta “política desde abajo”²³ tenemos algunos indicios y pistas que permiten reconstruir la dinámica sociopolítica y las lógicas vigentes durante el período en la región, y muy probablemente también para el resto de la Edad del Bronce Tardío. Aunque disponemos solamente de evidencia

¹⁷ Gottwald 1979: 391–400.

¹⁸ Cf. Pfoh 2020.

¹⁹ Sobre esta distinción básica en el dominio externo de Siria-Palestina, véase Liverani 1967; y también Pfoh 2016. Para una reciente comprensión de los súbditos egipcios en Asia como “vasallos”; cf. Morris 2018: 153–162.

²⁰ Liverani 1974: 348–350.

²¹ Cf. Pfoh 2016: 78–88; Gestoso Singer 2017.

²² Moran 1992; Liverani 1998; Rainey 2015.

²³ Liverani 1975; Pfoh 2014a.

fragmentaria sobre la presencia de tribus, propiamente dichas, como organizaciones sociales en el Levante en este período, a partir de las pistas que nos presenta el registro epigráfico-textual²⁴, la presencia de agentes pastoralistas así como de “elementos parasociales”, como M. B. Rowton llamó a los *habiru* y a otros grupos marginales a los centros urbanos, pueden ciertamente interpretarse como coincidiendo con estructuras tribales reales²⁵, y algo similar podría decirse para el reino de Amurru en el Levante septentrional en este período²⁶.

Desde un punto de vista analítico, es posible indicar que la subordinación de los reyes siro-palestineneses/cananeos a los poderes regionales se encontraba conceptualizada y esencialmente canalizada a través de una lógica sociopolítica patrón-cliente y, como tal, esta subordinación tiene necesariamente una expectativa de reciprocidad y protección políticas de la parte superior de la relación. En esta expectativa, no satisfecha por los amos egipcios del Levante meridional, podría expresarse el choque de concepciones sociopolíticas entre los egipcios y los pequeños reyes levantinos, expuesta en la correspondencia amarniana, tal como lo analizó por primera vez M. Liverani²⁷. Desde este punto de vista, las quejas y los reclamos recurrentes de los pequeños reyes que leemos en las cartas encuentran una explicación lógica. También puede decirse que una ideología patrimonial domina el lenguaje político nativo en el Levante²⁸, algo que bien podría considerarse una *household diplo-*

²⁴ Sapin 1982.

²⁵ Rowton 1977; Liverani 1979; Benz 2016: 114–137.

²⁶ Morris 2010; Benz 2016: 141–179. La presencia de tribus en la Palestina moderna se encuentra bien atestiguada en el registro etnográfico; véase, por ejemplo, Ashkenazi 1938: 51–53 (sobre los *sheiks* locales). La más bien anacrónica idea de que los pequeños líderes en Palestina durante el período de El Amarna eran también “*sheiks*” se encuentra presente—muy posiblemente, a causa del trabajo etnográfico en la región (cf., p.ej., Pierotti 1865: 269–279; Conder 1891; etc.)—en el tratamiento seminal de W. M. Flinders Petrie sobre este período y región; véase Petrie 1898: 9–10. También está presente en la traducción al inglés del relato de Sinuhé (datado hacia 1800 a.n.e.) en la tercera edición de *ANET*, en donde se lee: “The sheikh among them, who had been in Egypt, recognized me. Then he gave me water while he boiled milk for me. I went with him to his tribe. What they did (for me) was good” (*ANET*, 19, vv. 26–29).

²⁷ Liverani 1967.

²⁸ El tratamiento más comprensivo sobre patrimonialismo en el Cercano Oriente antiguo se encuentra en Schloen 2001; cf. también Pfoh 2016: 138–167; Reculeau 2016; para algunos reparos sobre el modelo patrimonial, a la luz del reino de Mari, cf. Fleming 2002.

macy, teniendo en cuenta las referencias hechas en la primera sección sobre el orden doméstico de la configuración política, o lo que es también, en gran medida, una propia *kinship diplomacy*, establecida entre las comunidades políticas locales y con pretensiones de expansión hacia fuera del territorio propio, en el que operaban regularmente.

El concepto de *kinship diplomacy*—que en rigor debería subsumirse al de *household diplomacy*, por ser este último más comprensivo—está tomado aquí del escenario histórico griego estudiado por C. P. Jones²⁹, el cual, por supuesto difiere del tema del presente trabajo, aunque mantiene no obstante algunas capacidades heurísticas. Jones³⁰ observa que “Even when kinship diplomacy is not concerned with relations with Greeks and hellenized barbarians, it always has the function of providing means of exchange between states, a mechanism whereby advantages of culture and descent can be converted into material and political ones”³¹. Esta última observación, particularmente, puede aplicarse sin reparos a la comunicación entre comunidades políticas en todo el Levante, de acuerdo con lo que podemos inferir de la epistolografía de este período³².

JEFES TRIBALES *QUA* REYES

Enfoquémonos ahora en la constitución interna de las pequeñas comunidades políticas del Levante meridional. Teniendo en cuenta la anterior presentación, sería en efecto posible comprender a los pequeños reyes del Levante meridional en este período como jefes tribales antes que como líderes de una organización estatal. De ello se desprende, pues, que la comunidad política gestionada por estos modestos líderes pueda ser conceptualizada de mejor modo a partir del concepto de “jefatura” tribal antes que del modelo de Estado arcaico, temprano,

²⁹ Jones 1999.

³⁰ Jones 1999: 16.

³¹ Más al respecto de las prácticas ceremoniales en los intercambios entre los grandes poderes del Bronce Tardío en Zaccagnini 1987.

³² Cf. Cunchillos 1989; Moran 1992; Liverani 1998; Rainey 2015; Charpin 2019.

etc.³³, o asimismo de un modelo de ciudad-Estado. En rigor, “ciudad-Estado” resulta un concepto como menos problemático para pensar y analizar la antropología política del Levante en el segundo milenio a.n.e.³⁴. La noción de jefatura está concebida aquí simplemente como una organización jerárquica de parentesco, conducida por el rango político y la acumulación de prestigio por parte del jefe con vistas al despliegue de autoridad dentro de su comunidad. Esta comprensión, sin embargo, no debe ser emplazada dentro de un marco interpretativa neo-evolucionista, en tanto que etapa inmediatamente anterior a una estatalidad en ciernes³⁵. En efecto, como señala J.-C. Muller³⁶, “les chefferies pourraient bien être des formations sociales *sui generis*, constituées selon une logique spécifique”; o también, atendiendo a Y. Alon³⁷:

A chieftaincy is an intermediate political structure between tribe and state, which incorporates some features of both. It is a power-sharing partnership which involves pastoral nomads, semi-sedentary tribesmen, and urban dwellers. The common action of this organisation is initiated and supervised by the chief, whose status and role is a vital characteristic of the chieftaincy. He must combine moral authority over his fellow tribesmen with the ability to deliver benefits and services to his followers.

Si bien disponemos de abundante evidencia arqueológica que ilustra la existencia efectiva y ubicua de centros urbanos de jerarquía política (vale decir, palacios) en el Levante, concentrando la práctica monárquica local en este período³⁸, se debe observar asimismo que un asentamiento urbano del estilo no excluye necesariamente la presencia de una organización social y política de corte tribal, anclada en una autoridad política de prestigio en un marco social de patrimonialismo.

³³ Cf. Claessen y Skalník 1978

³⁴ Cf. la discusión en Pfoh 2016: 98–107; y alternativamente en Benz 2016: 47–80.

³⁵ Cf. *supra* n. 7; y Campagno 2000. Véase también la mirada crítica sobre el término en Testart 2005: 91–97.

³⁶ Muller 2010: 138.

³⁷ Alon 2007: 10.

³⁸ Cf. Nigro 1995: 119–153; también Greenberg 2019: 310–336.

En efecto, en el Medio Oriente contemporáneo se atestigua la presencia de jefaturas tribales con asentos en centro urbanos³⁹. Por otro lado, podemos tomar en consideración cuán modesto e incluso precario era el aparato administrativo en Siria meridional y Palestina durante la segunda mitad del segundo milenio a.n.e.: no deberíamos pensar en este contexto en una burocracia como las presentes en centros políticos como Ugarit, Emar o Alalakh en el Levante septentrional, sino más bien en una administración llevada a cabo simplemente por los miembros más cercanos de la familia del monarca. Como L. Marfoe⁴⁰ ha observado al respecto de la organización política en el valle de Beqa', en Siria meridional, para el Bronce Tardío:

[...] within the south Syrian cities (except for Hazor) there was simply no room for the sort of state bureaucracy that can be discerned from the large north Syrian and Mesopotamian cities. It may then be conjectured that instead of a multitiered hierarchy of rigidly stratified social roles (as at Ugarit), the social organization among the small populations under consideration required that multiple roles be undertaken by a small urban elite group. [...] Royal lineages, government bureaucracy, priesthood, army, and mercenaries were probably less differentiated than in the larger north Syrian cities. [...] Socially, culturally, and economically, the urban elite – embodied in the conspicuous display and consumption of wealth in the palace-temple complex – stood more at the center than at the apex of a large but for the most part socially undifferentiated population. In this respect, the royal lineages may only have been the largest and wealthiest of a number of smaller and more fragmented kinship groups, whose principal occupations were in subsistence farming. [...] these 'city-states' did not form a patchwork of segmented social pyramids of power that engaged in 'foreign relations' across well-defined borders, much less consolidated territorial units of hierarchically tiered villages over which rival centers perpetually competed in border disputes. Neither the 'territories' nor the villages of the state were defined by land as much as they were by peo-

³⁹ Rowton 1976: 223; Khoury y Kostiner 1990b: 11.

⁴⁰ Marfoe 1979: 15–16.

ple. And the social framework that tied these people together may have been in fact relatively uniform kinship groups that solidified into more tightly organized units only within the palace-temple complex. [...] The state, in other words, was not 'oriental despotism' writ small; nor was it a genuine territorial unit, much less a unified one. It was in effect a network of personal and political ties centered on the palace-temple, where perhaps the king was not merely the last arbiter but possibly the sole arbiter.

Esta descripción, sin dudas, cuadra muy bien con un entendimiento tribal de la práctica política y la organización para todo el Levante meridional.

Se puede argumentar también que, como bien podemos observar en el repertorio epistolográfico de El Amarna⁴¹, tanto la cosmovisión política de los reyes de locales como su puesta en práctica de la misma se encontraban permeadas por una lógica recíprocaritaria de estructura asimétrica, vale decir, propia de relaciones tipo patrón-cliente. Como tal, los líderes locales amarnianos—una vez más—debían actuar como jefes, aun cuando ellos puedan haberse concebido como “reyes” de algún tipo. Así pues, la monarquía en el Levante meridional—particularmente bajo dominio egipcio—operaba de una manera ciertamente tribal, en tanto que el rey debía ganar la autoridad sobre su comunidad a través de un despliegue de actos de prestigio y de acciones “correctas”, como se espera que actúe un buen patrón⁴². En este contexto, pues, la observación etnohistórica de P. Dennis y M. Olien resulta pertinente, al analizar el título de “rey”, su función y su rol como mediador político en la sociedad. Los autores⁴³ indican lo siguiente:

The middleman's legitimacy by definition is not ideological but pragmatic. What can he do for us? is the question both sides are expected to ask of the middleman. From this definition, it follows that a middleman can never be a "real king," since the role of king implies a supreme sort of ideological legitimacy.

⁴¹ Liverani 1967.

⁴² Véase Pfoh 2019.

⁴³ Dennis y Olien 1984: 72.

Encontramos también varios ejemplos que ilustran esta conducta de mediación a nivel comunal en el registro etnohistórico de la Palestina moderna, especialmente con la figura del *muhtar* (lit. en árabe “elegido”), creada en 1864 por la administración otomana y mantenida en la región hasta la segunda mitad del siglo XX. Este agente mediador era un guardia civil y administrativo de la aldea, encargado de la recolección de impuestos y de articular órdenes y reclamos entre la administración imperial y su comunidad local⁴⁴.

Es relevante asimismo atender a lo que D. Graeber y M. Sahlins⁴⁵ indican en una obra reciente sobre la realeza en las sociedades “tradicionales”, en efecto de provecho para caracterizar los alcances sociopolíticos de la monarquía en el Levante meridional:

Kingship is a political economy of social subjugation rather than material coercion. Kingly power does not work on proprietary control of the subject people's means of existence so much as on the beneficial or awe-inspiring effects of royal largess, display, and prosperity. The objective of the political economy is the increase in the number and loyalty of subjects—as distinct from capitalist enterprise, which aims at the increase of capital wealth. To paraphrase a Marxian formula, the essential project of kingship economics is P–W–P’—where the political command of people gives an accumulation of wealth that yields a greater command of people—by contrast to the classic capitalist formula, W–P–W’—where the proprietary control of productive wealth (capital) gives the control of people (labor) in the aim of increasing productive wealth.

Adaptando, pues, estas tres observaciones, se podría sugerir en principio—siquiera como hipótesis de trabajo—una aparente diferenciación básica entre los reyes de Siria y los de Palestina en tanto mediadores sociales y políticos durante el Bronce Tardío, de acuerdo con el material textual de que disponemos hasta el momento: en el primer caso, el rey se encontraba imbuido con funciones esencialmente ideo-

⁴⁴ Cf. Baer 1980; también Lemche 2016: 139–140.

⁴⁵ Graeber y Sahlins 2017: 15.

lógicas y rituales (notablemente en Ugarit⁴⁶), y en el segundo caso, el rey poseía una performance políticamente más pragmática y mucho menos sacralizada⁴⁷. Esta sugerencia de una doble expresión de la monarquía siro-palestina merecería, en verdad, ser indagada en mayor detalle y profundidad.

En otras oportunidades⁴⁸, hemos realizado un análisis de la evidencia sobre la oposición interna a que deben responder los monarcas cananeos, como se refleja en la correspondencia amarniana, lo cual permite sostener aquí la imagen del monarca levantino como un líder que debe rendir cuentas ante su comunidad, tal como lo hacen los líderes de sociedades tribales. Los pequeños reyes del Levante meridional, por lo tanto, operaban como detentores de una autoridad tribal sobre el conjunto de subordinados, antes que como ejecutores de un poder político centralizado, en la sociedad local. Su autoridad residía, en última instancia, en el prestigio que podían obtener y acumular de cara a las necesidades de su propia comunidad. Como tal, esta autoridad política habría sido frágil e inestable, en necesidad de ser refrendada constantemente, en trato tanto con poderes superiores (vale decir, el faraón) como con sus propios clientes (vale decir, la “corte”, los hombres a su servicio personal, y el sector campesino *hupšu* en la sociedad)⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ Cf. Wyatt 2007.

⁴⁷ Véase la discusión en Renger 1988. Cabe notar aquí que en el panteón cananeo la divinidad también era comprendida a partir de un marco conceptual tribal. En efecto, como Gray (1952: 200) observó hace varios años: “[...] in the primitive tribal society, from which the people of Canaan on the foreland of the Arabian desert sprang and by which it was repeatedly replenished, god was conceived of as the highest authority in the tribe. As such he was a kinsman, *dieu parent*, as Dhorme [1932] has pointed out, and as such he stands in a moral relationship to his worshippers. He may be thought of as the father of the tribe or ‘uncle’ of smaller septs affiliated with or merged with the tribe. This state of social or religious development is not a matter of conjecture as far as concerns Canaan, but is actually attested in the Egyptian Execration Texts from Luxor and Saqqara of the 19th century. The theophoric names of chiefs of Syria and Palestine to a great extent express the conception that god is essentially a kinsman, and that not of the individual-whose age was not yet-but of the whole tribe”.

⁴⁸ Pfoh 2014a; 2014b.

⁴⁹ No obstante la referencia a instancias feudales, cf. Halligan 1983: 16: “In the role of the *hupšu*, the peasant might be conscripted for compulsory labor for royal projects or armed services, possibly as a yeoman in the infantry, or a bowman, or a reserve in general. The precise meaning of *hpt* [*hpt*] and its relation to *hupšu* is still a matter of continuing discussion. The sta-

Para ofrecer aquí un último ejemplo sobre la importancia de las estrategias comunicacionales de los pequeños reyes del período amarniano, imprescindibles para poder seguir manteniendo su autoridad política, podemos atender a un evento recurrente en la epistolografía amarniana: la petición al faraón de tropas para resolver problemas internos de los reinos o amenazas externas. Lo particularmente relevante de esta situación es la cantidad de soldados (arqueros) que son requeridos por los pequeños reyes cananeos para solucionar problemas domésticos o amenazas de líderes vecinos. Como bien resume N. P. Lemche⁵⁰, ‘Abdi-Heba le solicita al faraón que le envíe 50 soldados (EA 289:42–43)⁵¹; Rib-Adda, en una oportunidad, pide 20 hombres de Meluhḥa y 20 de Egipto (EA 108:67); en otra carta, Rib-Adda solicita 200 hombres (EA 71:24); y Abi-Milku de Tiro pide también solamente 20 arqueros en una carta (EA 151:15) y en otra, el pequeño líder simplemente pide por un solo soldado (EA 150:18).

¿Qué puede significar la petición de tan poca cantidad de tropas? Bien se podría pensar, por una parte, que un número tal (a efectos de poderío militar, algo irrelevante), nos refiere a lo pequeño que era el grupo humano (por ejemplo, campesinos, forajidos como los *ḥabiru*, la fuerza militar de los asentamientos vecinos) que se presentaba como amenaza. Estas cifras, pues, también hablan de lo endeble que era la defensa local al peticionar una ayuda tan modesta. Pero, por otra parte,

tus of the *hpt* [*hpt*] seems to be analogous to that of the *maryannu*; his freedom from working the lands to render capital for the king was his ‘fief’ *in perpetuum* as much as land was that of the aristocratic *maryannu*; the *hpt* [*hpt*] was bound to render military service instead of agricultural quotas. Yet, it is not incompatible that in times of peace he did work the land for his own subsistence as the Alalakh texts suggest. The plight of the peasant in the Amarna period was far more desperate than that seen in the Ugaritic literature. Whatever tribal organization may have preceded the rise of the feudal order, traces of it do not remain in the literature of Ugarit”. Por otro lado, el análisis de Salzman (2004: 77–101) sobre los límites sociales impuestos por los miembros de su comunidad a la autoridad de los líderes tribales, debería ser considerado aquí para ampliar el espectro interpretativo de la relativamente escasa evidencia disponible en la epistolografía de El Amarna.

⁵⁰ Lemche 1985: 419 n. 14.

⁵¹ Según Na’aman (2011: 37), “Fifty was the number of the [Egyptian] troops that had been withdrawn [from Jerusalem to Gaza], so it appears that in normal times a military force of such size was sufficient to preserve the order in the kingdom of Jerusalem”.

el número de tropas requeridas también podría explicarse si entendemos las peticiones como una estrategia del rey local, autopercibido como cliente del faraón, para ganar prestigio dentro de su propia comunidad: si el faraón respondía al pedido, el pequeño rey obtenía prestigio frente a su comunidad y así su autoridad política era reforzada⁵². Ambas situaciones son posibilidades razonables que, en cualquier caso, nos dirigen a concebir a las comunidades políticas del Levante meridional durante este período como configuraciones con la fragilidad propia del orden tribal atestiguado en diferentes instancias etnográficas.

CIERRE

Si algún tipo de conclusión—nunca definitiva—puede presentarse, luego de la precedente discusión, podría decirse con cierta confianza que es posible detectar claros indicios de política tribal en los espacios urbanizados en donde encontramos a los pequeños reyes del Levante meridional durante la segunda mitad del segundo milenio a.n.e. Por otro lado, como ya habíamos indicado, la presencia de una efectiva política tribal no hace necesario que una organización tribal dominante—tal como suele entenderse en los estudios antropológicos—sea inevitable también: estos reinos, en el sentido de que poseen nominalmente un “rey” gestionando la comunidad política, están en términos concretos liderados por jefes tribales, de acuerdo con su performance política; pero, cabe notarlo, estos reinos constituían ciertamente algo más que una mera tribu, tanto en un sentido institucional o tipológico como en una disposición atenta a las características de la dinámica sociopolítica general. Es aquí donde la figura de la “ciudad-Estado” suele emplearse por la historiografía especializada, pero como notábamos más arriba, este concepto no explica satisfactoriamente la dinámica política que definimos como tribal y remite ante todo a la expresión material del centro político (un palacio, un diseño urbano, etc.). Esta cuestión, junto con la posibilidad de una doble configuración de la

⁵² Cf. Lemche 2016: 136; Pfoh 2019: 251.

monarquía siro-palestina referida más arriba, merece también una indagación en mayor profundidad y detalle.

Las referencias a lo “tribal” o a un “tribalismo político” tienen entonces, en el presente análisis, un sentido ante todo heurístico que permite describir y analizar relaciones políticas en las que el parentesco y la alianza a través de redes de patronazgo, articulan de manera preponderante la configuración de la política⁵³. En efecto, las situaciones en las que el tribalismo parece por cierto manifestarse deberían comprenderse a partir de una serie de concepciones de lo político que se encuentran fijadas en estructuras patrimoniales (*household* o *maison*) y de parentesco biológico o “ficticio”, análogas a las expresiones tribales documentadas en el registro etnográfico de distintas locaciones y temporalidades. En otras palabras, el tribalismo en este contexto es más la expresión de una ideología o concepción política, antes que una forma excluyente de organización social. Y aun cuando los actores políticos locales provenientes de algunos de los principales centros urbanos del Levante meridional nunca reclamaron para sí mismos un origen tribal (al menos, no tenemos evidencia aún de ello), su performance política era en efecto notablemente tribal. En tal sentido, la concepción nativa de la autoridad, de la alianza y de la subordinación en el Levante meridional expresa siempre un vínculo *personal* entre las partes, pues se conducía en concreto a través de una lógica y una dinámica propias de un orden patrimonial de la sociedad, en el cual lo tribal puede ser comprendido.

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⁵³ Cf. Mair 1963: 28; Tapper 2009.

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MUMIENPORTRÄTS UND VERWANDTE DENKMÄLER: KLAUS PARLASCA Y LOS TEXTILES FUNERARIOS DECORADOS DEL EGIPTO PRERROMANO*

JÓNATAN ORTIZ-GARCÍA
jonatan.ortiz@uah.es
Universidad de Alcalá
Alcalá de Henares, España

Summary: *Mumienporträts und verwandte Denkmäler*: Klaus Parlasca and the Decorated Funerary Textiles of Pre-Roman Egypt

Klaus Parlasca is one of the researchers who has contributed the most to the advancement of Greco-Roman Egyptian archaeology. One of his most important publications was *Mumienporträts und verwandte Denkmäler* (1966), focusing on mummy portraits from Roman Egypt. One aspect of that work that has tended to attract less attention is its importance for the study of decorated funerary textiles of Pre-Roman Egypt. This article seeks to assess the book's relevance within the framework of current studies on the subject.

Keywords: Pre-Roman Egypt – Funerary Practices – Decorated Shrouds – Historiography – Klaus Parlasca

Resumen: *Mumienporträts und verwandte Denkmäler*: Klaus Parlasca y los textiles funerarios decorados de Egipto prerromano

Klaus Parlasca es uno de los investigadores que más ha contribuido al avance de la arqueología del Egipto grecorromano. Una de sus publicaciones más importantes fue *Mumienporträts und verwandte Denkmäler* (1966), centrada en los retratos de momia del Egipto romano. Un aspecto que ha solido llamar menos la atención de dicho trabajo es su importancia para el estudio de los textiles funerarios decorados del Egipto Prerromano. Este artículo busca valorar la relevancia del libro en el marco de los actuales estudios sobre el tema.

Palabras clave: Egipto prerromano – Prácticas funerarias – Sudarios decorados – Historiografía – Klaus Parlasca

Artículo recibido: 13 de agosto de 2020; aprobado: 2 de octubre de 2020.

*El presente artículo se ha elaborado en el marco de un contrato postdoctoral “Juan de la Cierva - Formación” financiado por el Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades de España.

INTRODUCCIÓN

Las obras clásicas de una determinada disciplina, lo son por su relevancia pasada, pero muchas veces también por lo bien que su importancia resiste el paso del tiempo. La primera obra de conjunto sobre retratos de momia fue publicada en 1966 por K. Parlasca con el título *Mumienporträts und verwandte Denkmäler* (“Retratos de momia y monumentos relacionados”)¹. Este libro, que todavía hoy es referencia obligada, constituye el hito fundamental en la investigación sobre la presencia de estas imágenes realistas de difuntos en los ajuares de tradición osiriana del Egipto romano. El autor realizaba un estudio dejando de lado la tradicional e incorrectamente sesgada denominación de “retratos del Fayum”, optando por un título y tratamiento del tema más acorde a la realidad geográfica de la aparición de aquellas representaciones funerarias plasmadas principalmente sobre tablas de madera, que formaban parte del acicalamiento de las momias en diversas regiones egipcias. En cualquier caso, nuestro objetivo en esta ocasión es analizar cómo ha envejecido el tratamiento del autor sobre los sudarios decorados del Egipto prerromano, que ha recibido menos atención.

Los sudarios pintados han aparecido generalmente mencionados en el marco de los estudios sobre retratística romana desde finales del siglo XIX, especialmente aquellos que incluyen retratos realistas de difuntos². Con posterioridad al libro de Parlasca, tanto los retratos sobre tabla de madera como las máscaras de momia han sido objeto de numerosos estudios³, pero no así (incomprensiblemente) los sudarios de tradición dinástica, que eran decorados también con representaciones idealizadas de los difuntos a modo de divinidades egipcias⁴. Se trata de unos objetos de gran interés para el estudio de las creencias

¹ Parlasca 1966.

² Parlasca 1966: 213–243.

³ La última obra de conjunto fue Borg 1996, pero han aparecido muchos catálogos con estos retratos desde los años 60 del s. XX, como por ejemplo: Parlasca 1969; Parlasca 1977; Parlasca 1980; Parlasca y Frenz 2003; Picton *et al.* 2007; Aubert *et al.* 2008.

⁴ Más allá de contribuciones puntuales, cf. Corcoran 1995; Bresciani 1996; Riggs 2005; Aubert 2008; Ortiz García 2020.

funerarias, porque son reflejo del estado de la religiosidad de tradición osiriana en época romana, que en ocasiones recogió aspectos de otras comunidades religiosas con las que convivía de forma estrecha. Se trata de un tipo de fuente polifacética (también importante para el conocimiento del arte antiguo, por ejemplo), que resulta fundamental para entender la pervivencia y cambio de la religiosidad funeraria egipcia en sus últimos momentos de vida⁵.

No obstante, cabe tener en cuenta que, a pesar del gran repertorio de época romana, la práctica de decorar telas funerarias no es algo que surja *ex novo* en el Egipto romano. La costumbre egipcia de envolver con tela de lino a los difuntos se remonta a tiempos predinásticos, al igual que la costumbre de decorar los textiles funerarios que acompañaban a los difuntos, tanto en forma de vendas, sudarios u otro tipo de tejidos. Se trata de una modalidad de ornamentación textil que evoluciona durante milenios hasta encontrar su punto álgido en el Egipto de los siglos I–III d.C.⁶

PRIMER HALLAZGO (CONOCIDO)

La más antigua mención al hallazgo de un sudario decorado se remonta al s. XVII: una noticia procedente de la publicación de los viajes de Pietro della Valle por Egipto⁷. El acontecimiento descrito tiene lugar mientras el viajero italiano trataba de desenterrar antigüedades egipcias en la necrópolis de Saqqara, el 25 de enero de 1616. Nos cuenta lo siguiente:

Mentre si attendeua al lauoro con feruore, vno di quei contadini, che dalla sera si era lasciato intendere di hauer non sò che cosa da vendermi; si accostò alle orrechie del mio Interprete, e gli disse pian piano, che egli haueua vna Mumia intera e molto bella, che se io la voleua comperare, me l'hauerebbe mostrata, che era là vicino:

⁵ Este periodo final de la religiosidad funeraria de tradición dinástica, el Más Allá osiriano, es tratado extensamente en Smith 2017: 421–537.

⁶ Ortiz-García 2020.

⁷ Sobre este personaje y sus viajes por Oriente remitimos a Gurney 1994.

*ma che non voleua, che lo sapesse alcuno degli altri contadini, perche hauerebbono voluto partecipare essi ancora del prezzo, che così deuono vsar frà di loro: però che se io voleua vederla, bisognaua, che andassi senza loro doue egli mi hauerebbe guidato (...). Arriuammo finalmente in vn luogo, doue presso ad vn pozzo cauato, che mi disse essere stato scoperto da lui trè ò quattro giorni prima, di dentro a certa rena, sotto alla quale la teneua nascosta, cauò vna Mumia, ouero corpo intero di vn'huomo morto, che, per esser benissimo conseruato, e curiosissimamente adorno e composto, a me me parue cosa molto bella, e galante (...)*⁸.

El texto forma parte de una narración que nos relata la aparición de dos momias con sendas envolturas ricamente ornamentadas, una de las cuales aparece de forma idealizada mediante una ilustración (**Fig. 1**). Más allá de su condición de primicia, el texto del Pietro della Valle es importante porque nos permite situar con precisión un tipo de producto funerario con unas características fácilmente reconocibles, que fue elaborado y utilizado en el área de la Menfis tardoantigua⁹. Se trata de una información altamente relevante dado que en pocas ocasiones conservamos datos fehacientes acerca del lugar de hallazgo de los sudarios decorados, siendo necesaria una compleja labor de contextualización geográfica y cronológica en función de modelos con origen y fecha conocidos o reconocibles¹⁰.

RETRATOS DE FAYUM (SIC): EXPOSICIONES Y CATÁLOGOS

La tradición iconográfica de origen dinástico que está presente en los sudarios del Egipto romano se plasmó de formas diversas, aunque la investigación precedente se ha centrado principalmente en aquellas manifestaciones artísticas protagonizadas por retratos realistas de los difuntos. Esta circunstancia encuentra su razón en el interés que, por los llamados retratos de momia (**Fig. 2**), entonces llamados “retratos de Fayum” por ser su principal lugar de hallazgo, surgió desde finales del

⁸ Della Valle 1650: 374–376.

⁹ Edgar 1905: 123–129 y lám. XLVII; Parlasca 1966: 189; Ortiz-García 2017a.

¹⁰ Ortiz-García 2020: 53–131.



Fig. 1.
Trabajos de Pietro della Valle en Saqqara
(Della Valle 1674: lám. entre pp. 198 y 199).

s. XIX a raíz de la llegada a Europa de ejemplares de tablas de madera con imágenes realistas de difuntos egipcios, así como debido a la organización de exposiciones itinerantes como las de O. T. Graf¹¹. Entre finales de dicho siglo y principios del XX tuvieron lugar los hallazgos importantes de retratos por parte de W. M. F. Petrie en la zona del oasis



Fig. 2.

Tabla con retrato de momia. *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Nueva York, 2013.438.
Dominio público por cortesía del *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Nueva York.

¹¹ Parlasca 1997: 127–128; Seemann 1999: 11–14.

de Fayum, que fueron repartidos ampliamente entre diversas colecciones no solo británicas¹², y de A. Gayet en Antinoópolis, muchos de cuyos sudarios pintados tuvieron como destino final el *Musée du Louvre*¹³.

En términos de publicaciones, a finales del s. XIX aparecen tanto el catálogo de las colecciones egipcias en exposición del *Ägyptisches Museum* de Berlín, que incluía entre las envolturas decoradas dos ejemplares que no sobrevivieron a la Segunda Guerra Mundial¹⁴; como un volumen sobre las piezas del *British Museum* de Londres, que menciona solo algunas de sus telas funerarias pintadas¹⁵. En cualquier caso, más allá de los catálogos de museos, la publicación de los sudarios ornamentados fue siempre ligada tanto a aquellos casos que presentan imágenes realistas de difuntos sobre tabla como a las máscaras funerarias, que eran vistas como plasmaciones también realistas de los rostros de aquellas personas momificadas, a pesar de que en muchos casos se trata de representaciones idealizadas procedentes de la antigua tradición egipcia dinástica¹⁶. En este sentido cabe destacar la publicación de retratos y máscaras del Museo Egipcio de El Cairo por parte de M. C. C. Edgar en 1905¹⁷, el primer gran catálogo sobre ajuares funerarios del Egipto romano, que además incorpora tres sudarios pintados con retrato realista de cuerpo entero¹⁸.

MUMIENPORTRÄTS UND VERWANDTE DENKMÄLER

En los primeros años de s. XX surgen los primeros tratados sobre retratística romana que incluían los magníficos sudarios pintados del Egipto romano, mientras que los precedentes seguían lejos de los focos de los investigadores. El primer estudio que le da cierta importancia a las envolturas decoradas (romanas con retrato), aunque la presencia de

¹² La consulta de la base de datos del proyecto británico *Artefacts of Excavation* da buena cuenta de ello: <http://egyptartefacts.griffith.ox.ac.uk> (archivada en *Wayback Machine* [<https://web.archive.org/>]).

¹³ Calament 2005. Para un catálogo de la colección parisina, cf. Aubert *et al.* 2008.

¹⁴ Königliche Museen zu Berlin 1894; Königliche Museen zu Berlin 1899.

¹⁵ Budge 1904; Budge 1924.

¹⁶ Grimm 1974.

¹⁷ Edgar 1905.

¹⁸ Edgar 1905: 123–131 y láms. XLVII–XLVIII.

estas sea testimonial y restringida principalmente a los de Antinoopolis excavados por Gayet, fue publicado por W. de Grüneisen en 1911: *Le portrait : traditions hellénistiques et influences orientales*¹⁹. Con posterioridad, hasta ya entrados en la segunda mitad de siglo, se sucederán diversos estudios sobre ejemplares o conjuntos de envolturas funerarias decoradas concretos²⁰; de nuevo, de casos romanos.

A comienzos de la segunda mitad de los años 60 del s. XX, como comentábamos arriba, se produce un punto de inflexión en los estudios sobre retratos de momia en general, y también en particular en lo referido a los sudarios pintados del antiguo Egipto. Este hito historiográfico y bibliográfico, que tiene lugar en 1966, lo constituye una publicación del investigador Parlasca: *Mumienporträts und verwandte Denkmäler*²¹. Si bien el autor dedica a los sudarios pintados dos capítulos enmarcados dentro del estudio de conjunto sobre retratística de difuntos momificados, se trata del primer y único estudio de conjunto sobre las envolturas decoradas de época romana, y el pionero también en dedicar un espacio a las telas funerarias de época anterior.

Parlasca se detiene en los sudarios pintados en dos capítulos principalmente. En el cuarto, *Die Mumienporträts aus Antinoopolis*, dedica varios apartados a los *Porträts auf Leichentüchern* (“Retratos en sudarios”)²², en el que incluye los principales ejemplos conocidos para la ciudad egipcia fundada por Adriano en el 130 d.C.²³, que corresponden a tipos muy definidos y característicos del lugar. En cambio, el grueso del tratamiento de Parlasca sobre los sudarios pintados tiene lugar en el capítulo cinco, *Bemalte Leichentücher* (“Sudarios pintados”), que consiste en un intento de clasificación que mezcla cronología, estilos, temas iconográficos y un breve repaso por temas religiosos²⁴; es aquí donde se incluye un recorrido por las telas funerarias decoradas de

¹⁹ De Grüneisen 1911.

²⁰ Una bibliografía extensa y comentada hasta 1966 puede encontrarse en Parlasca (1966: 213–243).

²¹ Parlasca 1966.

²² Parlasca 1966: 127–128, 137–143.

²³ Cf. Zahrnt 1988.

²⁴ Parlasca 1966: 152–192.

época anterior a la romana. Este capítulo refleja uno de los grandes problemas del estudio de los ajuares funerarios egipcios, especialmente para épocas tardías: la falta de conocimiento del contexto original de los hallazgos, que también provoca dificultades para datarlos²⁵.

El único intento de clasificación tipológica del conjunto de sudarios pintados del antiguo Egipto, repetimos, con el foco principal en el periodo romano, es el emprendido por Parlasca en la mencionada obra. Las diversas secciones del capítulo cuarto, dedicadas a las telas anteriores al punto álgido de la época romana, nos servirán para hacer un repaso sobre cómo ha avanzado la investigación sobre dichos objetos desde esta obra de gran importancia.

Bemalte Leichentücher als Vorstufen der Mumienporträts? (“¿Sudarios pintados como precursores de los retratos de momia?”)²⁶. En este corto apartado se cita a F. von Bissing²⁷ como el primer autor en plantear que el origen de la representación realista de los difuntos en sudarios estaría en los ejemplos con figura central osiriana de época ptolemaica. El propio Parlasca reconoce que se trata de un tema todavía por explorar tras criticar la hipótesis de von Bissing porque las telas citadas por él tenían imágenes idealizadas como protagonistas²⁸. A día de hoy, todavía no se ha realizado un estudio de conjunto sobre los sudarios pintados de época ptolemaica, más allá de publicaciones concretas de sudarios que posiblemente pertenezcan a dicho periodo²⁹. En cualquier caso, lo que está claro es que la práctica de pintar telas funerarias se remonta a una larga tradición que arranca en el Predinástico egipcio y que llega a incluir telas adheridas a los cuerpos momificados con detalles anatómicos en el Reino Antiguo o sudarios con grandes repertorios de textos en el Reino Nuevo, por ejemplo³⁰. Por otro lado, la costumbre de incluir retratos de los difuntos en elementos del ajuar es reflejo de la antigua tradición egipcia que es adaptada a los nuevos

²⁵ Ortiz-García 2020: 53–131.

²⁶ Parlasca 1966: 152–153.

²⁷ Von Bissing 1895.

²⁸ Parlasca 1966: 152.

²⁹ Puede consultarse, por ejemplo, Kurth 2010.

³⁰ Ortiz García 2017b.

tiempos y gustos³¹. Los sudarios pintados con retratos realistas o idealizados están estrechamente ligados a este fenómeno³².

Leichentücher und Verwandtes in ägyptischem Stil. Bemalte thebanische Stoffe des Neuen Reiches (“Sudarios y similares en estilo egipcio. Telas tebanas pintadas del Reino Nuevo”)³³. Tras la sección dedicada a los precursores inmediatos que pudieron derivar en la creación de los sudarios con retrato de época romana, Parlasca comienza con su repaso por las telas pintadas de épocas anteriores porque, según reconoce, podría resultar de utilidad para contextualizar la práctica en la época que le interesa, la romana. El tratamiento de las telas del Reino Nuevo se centra en citar algunos ejemplos de las telas e indumentos votivos ofrecidos a la diosa Hathor. Este conjunto de textiles decorados de uso religioso no será estudiado como conjunto hasta 30 años después por parte G. Pinch, en el marco de su libro sobre ofrendas votivas a la mencionada divinidad³⁴. Se trata generalmente de telas rectangulares de pequeño formato y polícromas, que incluyen representaciones de la diosa Hathor, pero que también podían tener forma de indumentos como camisolas. De este periodo, deja de lado Parlasca, por ejemplo, los sudarios que incluyen textos e ilustraciones del Libro de Salida al Día, que estarían más vinculados conceptualmente a los sudarios de época romana³⁵.

Leichentücher der Spätzeit (“Sudarios del Periodo Tardío”)³⁶. En el Periodo Tardío dinástico sitúa Parlasca dos tipos de telas: uno polícromo y otro monocromo. En el primer grupo se cita únicamente una tela del *Metropolitan Museum of Art* de Nueva York (44.2.3) (**Fig. 3**) similar, según él, a las votivas relacionadas con Hathor. No obstante, se trata de un tipo de textiles que presentan escenas de difuntos sentados delante de mesas de ofrendas, es decir, que tienen un uso funerario en momias; y, por otro lado, son un producto mortuario que corresponde

³¹ Taylor 2000.

³² Ortiz-García 2020.

³³ Parlasca 1966: 153–154.

³⁴ Pinch 1996: 102–134 y lám. 14B–27B.

³⁵ Remitimos a tres publicaciones con ejemplos de estos sudarios: Gabolde 2008; Müller-Roth 2008; Díaz-Iglesias 2018.

³⁶ Parlasca 1966: 154–157.



Fig. 3.

Tela funeraria pintada del Reino Nuevo. *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Nueva York, 44.2.3. Dominio público por cortesía del *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Nueva York.

más bien a una cronología del Reino Nuevo, no al Periodo Tardío. En cuanto al segundo grupo, aquel de las telas monocromas, realizadas con líneas negras o de color rojizo, se incluyen dos tipos que Parlasca trata como si fueran uno monolítico: uno anepigráfico con escenas diversas, generalmente incluyendo alguna divinidad o algún personaje junto con otros motivos variados (cocodrilos, ojo-*udjat*, etc); y por otro lado, otro conjunto con una divinidad acompañada de un texto (en ocasiones por encima de la deidad) relativo a esta y al difunto a quien pertenecían los textiles (**Fig. 4**). Dentro de este repertorio monocromo, el primer grupo, de un tamaño menor, no se trata de sudarios, sino más bien de amuletos textiles de uso funerario; este tipo de textiles, junto con vendajes escritos y decorados de época parecida fueron estudiados por H. Kockelmann en 2008; algunos de ellos tuvieron uso todavía en época ptolemaica³⁷. Por otro lado, las telas monocromas con textos pertene-

³⁷ Kockelmann 2008.

cen al Tercer Periodo Intermedio y se trata de coberturas, más que envolturas, que eran situadas sobre las momias, dejando la cabeza al descubierto. El único estudio hasta la fecha de un grupo importante de este tipo de tejidos funerarios, en este caso aquellos procedentes de Babel-Gassus (Deir el-Bahari, Tebas), fue publicado por A. Abdalla en 1988³⁸; quien las denomina “*Osiris-cloths*”, a pesar de que se incluyen imágenes de otras divinidades también. Se trata de un repertorio que, en virtud de antiguos y nuevos hallazgos, requeriría de un estudio completo que permitiera conocer mejor el uso de un producto funerario delimitado cronológicamente, según parece, a los comienzos del Tercer Periodo Intermedio. Al respecto de este tipo de coberturas funerarias también resulta interesante la tela anaranjada (originalmente roja) que se encontró en la momia de Ramsés III (CG 61083)³⁹ cuando se halló en la DB 320 y que, en el proceso de desenvoltura, G. Maspero describe someramente:

*La toile orange détachée, on aperçut, sur le linceul en toile blanche qui venait immédiatement au-dessous, une inscription en quatre lignes : “L’an XIII et le second mois de Shomou, le 28, ce jour-là, le premier prophète d’Amon, roi des dieux, Pinotmou, fils du premier prophète d’Amon, Piônkh, le scribe du temple Zosersoukhonsou, et le scribe de la nécropole Boutehamon, allèrent restaurer le défunt roi Ousirmari-Mîamoun et l’établir pour l’éternité”*⁴⁰.

Lo que parece claro es que la tela de tonalidad naranja pertenece al momento del re-enterramiento de la momia de Ramsés III en la Dinastía XXI, por estar encima del texto que hace referencia al evento. Lo relevante de esta cobertura son sus características que la diferencian del resto de sudarios de la época (hasta donde sabemos, publicados): tiene forma de cabeza de animal en la parte superior (¿leopardo? ¿cocodrilo?) y los detalles de los ojos y las cejas están pintados de negro, mientras que la parte posterior de cabeza y las orejas están representadas

³⁸ Abdalla 1988.

³⁹ Una imagen de la misma puede verse en El Saddik (2006: 38).

⁴⁰ Maspero 1886: 298.



Fig. 4.

Sudario tebano del Tercer Periodo Intermedio. *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Nueva York, 25.3.24. Dominio público por cortesía del *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Nueva York.

con pigmento rojo. Su tamaño está pensado para dejar la cabeza al descubierto, así que por fecha y por concepto general pertenece al grupo de sudarios decorados de la Dinastía XXI. La cobertura en forma de animal que fue situada sobre la momia de Ramsés III no ha sido mencionada con anterioridad en relación con los mencionados sudarios del Tercer Periodo Intermedio, porque no había sido propuesta una cronología para ella ni se habían puesto de relieve sus especiales características.

Volviendo a Parlasca, el autor no menciona ningún otro sudario en este apartado centrado en el Periodo Tardío. Esto es debido a que había y todavía hay un vacío importante en nuestro conocimiento sobre las envolturas funerarias decoradas tras los comienzos del Tercer Periodo Intermedio y hasta el comienzo de la época ptolemaica; más allá de los amuletos textiles y los vendajes mencionados arriba. Para este lapso temporal, solo conocemos dos ejemplares inéditos del *Petrie Museum* que se asemejan a ataúdes del Tercer Periodo Intermedio y el Periodo Tardío, respectivamente: UC 36209 y UC 45845. En cualquier caso, requerirían un estudio detallado en comparación con los ajuares de las mencionadas épocas, que no cabe en este repaso a la obra de Parlasca.

Finalmente, también debemos mencionar que desde el Periodo Tardío comienzan a aparecer las coberturas textiles que incluyen representaciones pintadas de redes de fayenza y de cartonajes y que eran situadas sobre las momias. De nuevo, se trata de un material que no ha sido objeto de un estudio de conjunto, aunque parece que tienen un uso al menos desde el Periodo Tardío hasta la época ptolemaica junto al empleo de continuado de los cartonajes y redes de fayenza que son plasmados en los textiles⁴¹.

Ptolemäische Leichentücher (“Sudarios ptolemaicos”)⁴². Parlasca reconoce al inicio de este apartado la dificultad que presentan los sudarios de época ptolemaica. Efectivamente, hay un numeroso repertorio que se encuentra en un limbo cronológico que todavía hoy no ha

⁴¹ Dos ejemplos ptolemaicos son: un ejemplar de Ajmín en el *British Museum* (EA 17177) (Budge [1904: 119]; Budge [1924: 136–137]) y otro procedente de excavaciones modernas en la necrópolis de El-Deir (Dunand *et al.* [2005]; a pesar de que los autores propusieron una datación romana).

⁴² Parlasca 1966: 157–159.

sido resuelto por la falta de un estudio centrado en el mismo, pero especialmente por la falta de contexto conocido para la mayoría de los ejemplos. Los márgenes inferiores que separan los sudarios ptolemaicos de los dinásticos tardíos no están claros y del mismo modo sucede con el límite superior, con algunos ejemplos en cronologías que no han podido determinarse con claridad si son tardo-ptolemaicas o temprano-romanas. Parlasca cita en la sección sobre los sudarios ptolemaicos el ejemplo *Brooklyn Museum*, Brooklyn, 37.1811E (Fig. 5)⁴³, que por el retrato doble del difunto parece claro que pertenece al periodo griego de Egipto⁴⁴; y que todavía no ha sido objeto de un estudio pormenori-



Fig. 5.

Sudario ptolemaico. *Brooklyn Museum*, Brooklyn, 37.1811E.

Foto: *Brooklyn Museum*, Creative Commons-BY.

⁴³ A este sudario le falta la parte superior, parte de la cual creemos que es un fragmento inédito de otro museo: *World Museum, National Museums*, Liverpool 1973.503.

⁴⁴ Parlasca 1966: 157–159.

zado. Como paralelo de este sudario de Brooklyn se citan dos fragmentos de la Colección A. Gallatin, que posteriormente fueron comprados por el *Metropolitan Museum of Art* de Nueva York, y que tienen cada uno la imagen de una diosa (presumiblemente Isis y Neftis)⁴⁵; su arcaica iconografía, a nuestro parecer, nos remite a un periodo bastante antiguo del periodo ptolemaico o incluso tardío-dinástico.

Por otro lado, Parlasca menciona tres ejemplos de sudarios ptolemaicos (como muy tarde de principios de época romana)⁴⁶ pertenecientes a un tipo de composición que incorpora un texto circundante que enmarca la decoración consistente en una figura central osiriana y escenas deudoras de la tradición del Libro de Salida al Día en los costados: Museo Pushkin, Moscú, I. 1a 5764 (**Fig. 6**)⁴⁷; *Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung*, Berlín, 22728⁴⁸; y *Penn Museum*, Filadelfia, 36–2–1⁴⁹. Estos tres sudarios junto a un cuarto del mismo tipo (Museo Pushkin, Moscú, I. 1a 5763)⁵⁰ fueron estudiados por D. Kurth en 2010, en el marco de una monografía sobre materiales de época romana. A pesar de la cronología que trata esta obra de Kurth, el propio autor reconoce dificultades para determinar si se trata de sudarios ptolemaicos o romanos⁵¹. A este grupo de texto circundante mencionado por Parlasca o estudiado por Kurth queremos añadir un sudario de Ipswich mencionado en una publicación, aunque no estudiado (*Ipswich Museum*, Ipswich, R.1932–28.3–4)⁵²; un fragmento inédito en Londres (*British Museum*, EA 73706); y otro fragmento inédito en Toronto (*Royal Ontario Museum*, 910.21.2).

⁴⁵ Cooney 1953: 128 (nos. 94a-b) y láms. LVI–LVII.

⁴⁶ Parlasca (1966: 159) menciona que H. Drerup (1933) los sitúa como helenísticos.

⁴⁷ Citado como Colección H. Hoffmann, Parlasca (1966: 159) y estudiado en Kurth (2010: 34–52 y fig. 2).

⁴⁸ Kurth 2010: 76–90 y fig. 5.

⁴⁹ Kurth 2010: 91–107, figs. 6a–b y 7.

⁵⁰ Kurth 2010: 7–33 y fig. 1.

⁵¹ Kurth 2010: *passim*.

⁵² Plunkett 1993: 52 y fig. p. 51



Fig. 6.

Sudario de texto circundante (Legrain 1894: fig. p. 100).

Los sudarios con figura central idealizada (generalmente osiriana) de gran formato y acompañada muchas veces de escenas y motivos religioso (sin texto circundante) son los más numerosos de entre los reconocibles como de época ptolemaica. Al respecto de este tipo de textil funerario, teniendo en cuenta sus características (texto y/o iconografía), y a pesar de que no hemos podido estudiar con el detenimiento merecido las piezas, nos gustaría ofrecer un listado de trabajo con ejemplos que creemos que pertenecen a esta época, ordenados orientativamente y con una propuesta (provisional en la mayoría de los casos porque de pocos se conoce su lugar de hallazgo) sobre su posible lugar de origen:

TEBAS

- *Field Museum*, Chicago, 105200⁵³.
- *Field Museum*, Chicago, 105190⁵⁴.
- *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Nueva York, 44.7a⁵⁵.
- *Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum*, Hildesheim, PM2652⁵⁶.
- *Field Museum*, Chicago, 105201⁵⁷.
- TT —400—⁵⁸.
- *Victoria and Albert Museum*, Londres, 2131–1900⁵⁹.
- *Victoria and Albert Museum*, Londres, 2132–1900⁶⁰.
- *Världskulturmuseerna*, Estocolmo, MM10167⁶¹.
- *Ipswich Museum*, Ipswich, 1932–28.3⁶².

⁵³ Inédito.

⁵⁴ Situado dentro del apartado de los “*Spätere Osiris-Tücher*” en Parlasca (1966: 160 y n. 53, p. 160).

⁵⁵ C. Riggs (2008: 290) lo sitúa en los ss. I a.C.–I d.C., mientras que no propone un origen para la tela. El parecido iconográfico con las otras telas tebanas posteriores (cf. Ortiz-García 2020) creemos que la sitúa en la Tebas ptolemaica.

⁵⁶ Aparece mencionado, aunque como romano, en Parlasca (1966: 165 y n. 91, p. 165).

⁵⁷ Inédito.

⁵⁸ Schreiber 2009: 123.

⁵⁹ Inédito.

⁶⁰ Mencionado como romano en Parlasca (1966: 163 y n. 75, p. 163).

⁶¹ Incluido entre las “*Hathor-Tücher*” romanas en: Parlasca (1966: 161 y n. 60, p. 161).

⁶² Inédito.

MENFIS

- *Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung*, Berlín, 11654⁶³.
- *Museo egizio*, Florencia, 10046+10047⁶⁴.
- *British Museum*, Londres, EA6883a⁶⁵.
- *British Museum*, Londres, EA6883d⁶⁶.
- *British Museum*, Londres, EA6883b⁶⁷.
- *British Museum*, Londres, EA6883e⁶⁸.
- *British Museum*, Londres, EA6883f⁶⁹.
- *Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung*, Berlín, 11655⁷⁰.
- Tumba de Pabes⁷¹.
- *Art Institute*, Chicago, 1910.256 + *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Nueva York 66.99.144⁷².
- *Brooklyn Museum*, Brooklyn, 37.1815Ea-b⁷³.
- *Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, 20.895⁷⁴.
- *Brooklyn Museum*, Brooklyn, 37.1811E⁷⁵.

⁶³ Descripción somera en *Königliche Museen zu Berlin* 1894: 258; *Königliche Museen zu Berlin* 1899: 355.

⁶⁴ Quagliarella 2009: 35. Son datados como ss. I-II d.C., pero el modelo es muy similar al ptolemaico *Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung*, Berlín, 11654.

⁶⁵ Inédito. Todo el grupo catalogado como EA6883, siete referencias en total, fue comprado al Reverendo Greville John Chester en 1881, sin que conste nada más acerca de su origen o la relación entre los fragmentos, ni en los libros de registro, ni en las BS del *British Museum*.

⁶⁶ Inédito.

⁶⁷ Inédito.

⁶⁸ Inédito.

⁶⁹ Inédito.

⁷⁰ Brevemente descrito en: *Königliche Museen zu Berlin* 1894: 258; *Königliche Museen zu Berlin* 1899: 355.

⁷¹ Raven 2001: 48 (no. 173), láms. 30 (no. 173) y 79; es datado entre los ss. II-III d.C., pero encaja mejor con los modelos ptolemaicos.

⁷² Inéditos. Estos fragmentos no habían sido puestos en relación con anterioridad. *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Nueva York, 66.99.144 completa las decoraciones laterales hasta el codo derecho de la figura central de *Art Institute*, Chicago, 1910.256.

⁷³ Inédito.

⁷⁴ Inédito. La imagen del difunto tras Anubis es similar a la de *Brooklyn Museum*, Brooklyn, 37.1811E.

⁷⁵ Parlasca y Frenz 2003: 110 (no. 1007) y lám. 200.3

- *World Museum, National Museums*, Liverpool, 1973.4.503⁷⁶.
- *British Museum*, Londres, EA6883c+g⁷⁷.

Finalmente, más allá de envolturas/coberturas funerarias decoradas parciales como la *Universität Leipzig, Ägyptisches Museum* 7810⁷⁸, nos gustaría mencionar que entre el Periodo Tardío y el periodo ptolemaico (seguramente en ambas épocas) también tenemos una serie de sudarios pintados con una imagen de un leopardo (contornos y algunos detalles), e incluso estando rematada la tela en forma de la cabeza del animal. Este tipo de piezas recuerdan al ejemplo del sudario de la Dinastía XXI situado sobre Ramsés III que mencionábamos arriba, y puede que forme parte de una tradición que pudo haber comenzado de modo similar al atuendo animal de los sacerdotes⁷⁹. Un ejemplo de sudario con leopardo del Tercer Periodo Intermedio es el encontrado durante la apertura y el desenrollado de una momia en la Florencia el año 1827⁸⁰; actualmente se encuentra en el *Canterbury Museum* de Christchurch (Nueva Zelanda) con número de referencia EA1988.73–77⁸¹. Por otro lado, en los últimos 20 años se han hallado ejemplos tebanos de este tipo de sudarios en la tumba TT32, con el más que interesante detalle de haber aparecido con materiales ptolemaicos que certifican su cronología⁸².

Tras el recorrido por las épocas anteriores al Egipto romano, Parlasca inicia una serie de apartados dentro del capítulo cuatro en los que se centra en distintos sudarios de los siglos I–IV d.C., que están agrupados más o menos por tipos similares; como él los entendía. En

⁷⁶ Inédito. Creemos que esta imagen osiriana puede ser el eslabón entre los modelos de figura central ptolemaicos y los sudarios romanos de Osiris-difunto-psicopompo.

⁷⁷ Inédito.

⁷⁸ Töpfer 2016.

⁷⁹ Sobre el indumento ritual de leopardo, véase Rummel (2007), aunque la autora utiliza erróneamente la denominación de pantera para el animal.

⁸⁰ Migliarini 1855: 163–164. Esta obra se cita muchas veces de forma incorrecta otorgando la autoría del texto a C. H. Cottrell, que fue quien tradujo el texto del italiano al inglés para su publicación. A continuación del relato de Migliarino aparecen unas notas de S. Birch al respecto.

⁸¹ Se encuentra en bastante mal estado y no ha sido objeto de estudio y publicación.

⁸² Schreiber 2007: figs. 43–48.

cualquier caso, no es este el lugar para analizar sus aportaciones sobre dichas piezas, especialmente porque recientemente se publicó una monografía al respecto⁸³.

CONSIDERACIONES FINALES

Nos gustaría terminar enfatizando el hecho de que, a pesar de que la incidencia en la separación por periodos de los sudarios pintados, lógicamente se trata de una cuestión artificial que buscar clarificar la organización del repertorio. Hay una continuidad en la práctica hasta época romana, más allá de innovaciones concretas, que no entiende de delimitaciones histórico-políticas. Estas no afectan tanto a los usos en los sudarios pintados como los contactos religiosos que se producen en las mencionadas épocas.

Con posterioridad a esta obra de Parlasca de 1966 son diversas las exposiciones⁸⁴ o los catálogos⁸⁵ que han reunido repertorios importantes de sudarios pintados de tipo diverso, así como algún estudio sobre un grupo concretos de envolturas funerarias decoradas⁸⁶. No obstante, casi todos los esfuerzos se han centrado en sudarios de época romana. Nuestro trabajo ha buscado poner en valor la labor pionera de Parlasca para los sudarios decorados de épocas anteriores y añadir algunas cuestiones más al respecto de la investigación de los últimos años sobre los sudarios decorados del antiguo Egipto, un campo en el que queda mucho trabajo por realizar.

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⁸³ Véase Ortiz-García 2020.

⁸⁴ Por ejemplo, Parlasca y Seeman 1991; Walker y Bierbrier 1997; Walker 2000.

⁸⁵ Parlasca 1969; Parlasca 1977; Parlasca 1980; Parlasca y Frenz 2003.

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AN INDUSTRIAL ZONE AND AN ELABORATE WINEPRESS AT GAN HA-DAROM, ISRAEL

AYELET DAYAN

ayeletda@israntique.org.il

DIEGO BARKAN

diego@israntique.org.il

IGAL RADASHKOVSKY

igalrad@israntique.org.il

Israel Antiquities Authority

Tel Aviv, Israel

Summary: An Industrial Zone and an Elaborate Winepress at Gan Ha-Darom, Israel

Remains from the Late Roman, Byzantine, Crusader, Ayubic and Mamluk periods were identified in archaeological excavations at the Gan Ha-Darom site. Two major stages of settlement in the Byzantine and Middle Ages were exposed in the excavations. Early remains were revealed indicating that a farmhouse or a monastery existed in the 4th–6th centuries CE, which includes a mosaic-paved chapel decorated with geometric designs and remains of at least four installations, probably winepresses. At the time, the site also served as an agricultural hinterland and an industrial zone, evidenced by an elaborate winepress that was exposed c. 120 m south of the farmhouse/monastery. In one of its collecting vats was built as secondary stage pottery-kiln. This article will discuss the industrial zone and the elaborate winepress.

Keywords: Byzantine – Winepress – Industrial – Agricultural – Rural – Monastery – Mosaic

Resumen: Un asentamiento agrícola e industrial en Gan Ha-Darom, Israel

Restos de los períodos romano tardío, bizantino, cruzado, ayubí y mameluco fueron identificados en excavaciones arqueológicas en el sitio de Gan Ha-Darom, Israel. En las excavaciones fueron expuestos dos importantes niveles de asentamiento durante el período bizantino y la Edad Media. Los descubrimientos en la capa más temprana revelaron que durante los siglos IV–VI e.c. existió en el sitio una granja o monasterio.

Article received: September 23, 2020; approved: February 6, 2021.

Los restos incluyen una capilla pavimentada con mosaicos decorados con diseños geométricos así como restos de al menos cuatro instalaciones, probablemente lagares (prensas de vino). Durante ese período, el funcionamiento del sitio estuvo ligado con explotaciones agrarias e industriales, evidenciadas por otro sofisticado lagar que fue expuesto *ca.* 120 m al sur de la granja/monasterio. En una etapa secundaria en uno de sus pozos colectores se construyó un horno de alfarería. Este artículo tratará sobre dicha zona industrial y el elaborado lagar.

Palabras clave: Bizantino – Lagar – Industrial – Agrícola – Rural – Monasterio – Mosaico

Preface

The site is located on a low hill where remains of an extensive settlement in which *kurkar* (sandstone) building stones were found, along with the remains of installations and pottery sherds dating from the Roman to the Ottoman periods.¹ At Horbat Meshullam, *ca.* 1.5 km southwest of the excavation area, remains were excavated in the past of an installation dating to the Roman-Byzantine period.² In a survey that preceded the excavation at Gan Ha-Darom, architecture remains were detected: *kurkar* stones, some dressed, were found protruding on the surface, perhaps the remains of a structure, as well as pottery sherds, dated mostly to the Byzantine period. These included fragments of a *tabun*, jars, kraters, a casserole and a few sherds, dating from the late Roman-early Byzantine periods. Following the development survey, probes were made in this area, revealing remains of early walls and occupation levels. The present excavation was conducted in the wake of these findings. Archaeological excavations had been undertaken in the vicinity of the site in the past (see **Fig. 1**).

¹ Barda and Zbenovich 2005.

² Kanias 2006.

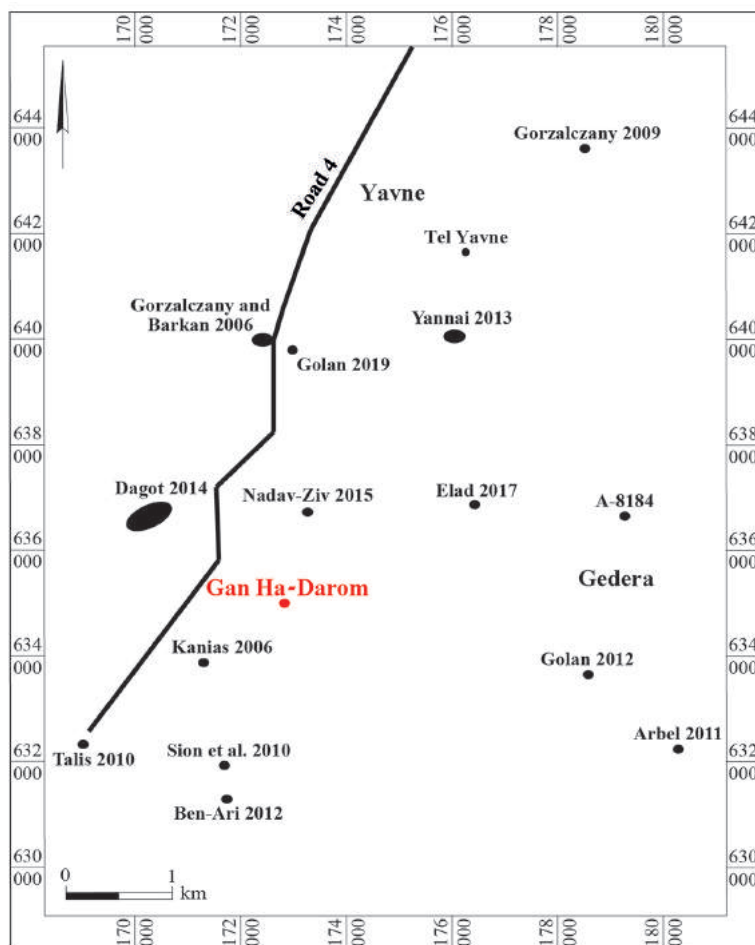


Fig. 1.

Location map
(map design: Angelina Dagot).

In the site discussed here³ (6.1 dunams; **Fig. 2**) remains were identified from five periods: Roman (second-third centuries CE), Byzantine

³ From October 2018 to May 2019, an archaeological excavation took place in a cultivated area within the archaeological site of Gan Ha-Darom (Permit Nos. A-8357, A-8348; map ref. 172680-728/634800-5010), ahead of the construction of road 3922 connecting Gan Yavne and road 42. The excavation, on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and underwritten by the government

(fourth-sixth centuries CE), Crusader (twelfth-thirteenth centuries CE), Ayyubid (twelfth-thirteenth centuries CE) and Mamluk (fourteenth-early sixteenth centuries CE). The archaeological accumulations from the Roman period included pottery sherds and glass. Several construction phases dating to the Byzantine period were identified. Early remains were found that attest to the presence of a farmhouse or monastery dating to the fourth-sixth centuries CE. The complex contained a chapel paved with a mosaic featuring very well-executed vegetal and geometric patterns as well as remains of at least four agricultural installations, apparently winepresses. During that period the site served as agricultural hinterland and an industrial zone which contained an elaborate winepress unearthed *ca.* 120 m south, and the construction in a later phase of a pottery kiln in one of the winepress collection vats.

In addition, evidence of a rural settlement was also exposed from the Crusader and the Ayyubid/Mamluk periods, during the twelfth-fifteenth centuries CE. The medieval stratum, depth 0.3–0.5 m below the surface, featured in a variety of pits and surfaces consisting of small stones—foundation, flooring or a work surface—which overlay

urban development corporation Arim, was directed by A. Dayan and D. Barkan, with the assistance of Y. Amrani and E. Bechar (administration), D. Golan, M. Marmelstein, L. Nadav-Ziv and A. Tamir (area supervisors), G. Tal, K. Serezo and A. Reiss (area supervisors assistance), A. Waiman and A. Ben-Hamo (management of finds storage), I. Radashkovsky (metal detection), A. Gorzalczany and R. Be'eri (deputy area supervisors), R. Mishayev, M. Kahan and V. Essman (surveying and drafting), A. Peretz (field photography and aerial photography), E. Aladjem (photogrammetry), Y. Marmelstein (field photography, drone photography and photogrammetry), P. Gendelman (adviser and pottery identification), E. Stern (pottery identification), Y. Gorin-Rosen (glass), L. Perry and Z. Turgeman (faunal remains), Y. Nagar and V. Eshed (anthropology), Y. Asher (analytical laboratory), S. Krispin (metal detection), A. Dagot (GPS), I. Yonish (archaeological oversight), N. Sukenik (archaeobotany), A. Inbar, Z. Nagar, N. Lindberg, G. Fish, R. Levi and Y. Harmati (conservation), N. Davidov (photographing mosaics), M. Mulokandov and V. Shustin (preliminary probes), M. Ben-Yaakov, A. Rosenthal, A. Bar, A. Amit, Z. Firer, A. Sha'ibi and G. Stern (youth counsellors) and L. Habas, R. Talgam, A. Savariego, E. Ayalon, Y. Dray and R. Marom (consultation). Workers from Hebron, Ashkelon and Wadi 'Ara took part in the excavation, as well as young people from the urban social service project Nahal B'Kehila, the pre-military academies, Nofei Prat, Be'eri, Melah Ha-Aretz, Erez Yerushalayim, Erez Lod, Aderet Ayanot and Aderet Revadim, and students from the Neveh Hadassah and WIZO Hadassim high schools, the Karnei Shomron and Hatzim Itamar yeshivas, the Ma'aseh movement gap-year program, the Zvia High School in Lod and young people from Jaffa. The maps, photos and drafting are courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

part of the remains from the Byzantine period, mainly the northern part where the farmhouse/monastery complex was found. This article will discuss the industrial zone and the elaborate winepress.

An Industrial Zone: Description of the Findings

Industrial zone, total area: approximately 17.6×26.5 m (Fig. 3), includes the remains of a large building. The exterior walls of the building are built of small fieldstones bonded with a gray bonding material preserved in two to five courses. The foundations of the walls were built into the *hamra* (local red sandy soil) and in some places the stones were placed on top of the natural *kurkar* bedrock. The building is divided into four spaces (I–IV; room I *ca.* 4×8 m, rooms II–IV *ca.* 4×4 m) by internal walls. Room I has a plastered pool (depth 0.5 m); the walls of the pool are built of small fieldstones bonded with gray bonding material. A section of a bench or step survived in the northwest



Fig. 2.
The excavation, aerial view, looking north
(photographer: Assaf Peretz).

corner of the pool. In the wall next to the pool to the north is a semicircular niche, perhaps a remnant of an installation that was sunk into the wall. East of the pool are remains of a stone floor made of flat *kurkar* stones that has been preserved. Remains of flooring that were found adjacent to the pool to the north and south may indicate that originally the entire room was paved with stone slabs that approached the pool. In Room IV, a section of another stone floor was preserved, similar to the floor in Room I. The pool indicates that the building was not used as a residence and was an integral part of the site's industry. No significant findings were revealed in rooms II and III.



Fig. 3.
The remains of a large building, aerial view, looking east
(photographer: Assaf Peretz).



Fig. 4.

The remains of a winepress, aerial view, looking east
(photographer: Assaf Peretz).



Fig. 5.

The remains of a winepress, aerial view, looking north
(photographer: Assaf Peretz).



Fig. 6.

The remains of a winepress, aerial view, looking south
(photographer: Assaf Peretz).

A large, elaborate winepress was exposed to the east of the building (Figs. 4–6). The winepress was built on a foundation, dug into the *hamra* soil, and made of small and medium-sized fieldstones. Winepress treading floor bounded by walls; The northern wall of the winepress was not preserved. The mosaic of the treading floor was robbed, evidence of which exists thanks to several stones that were preserved adjacent to the walls. In the center of the treading floor was a pit in which a screw-type squeezing device was installed; the base seems to have been robbed, while the wooden parts did not remain. To the west of the treading floor were two cells. The cell walls were built on the foundation that served for the entire complex. There was a narrow compartment between the two cells. The walls of the cells are made up of two rows of small fieldstones, bonded with a gray bonding material mixed with the shells. The cells were paved with white “industrial” mosaic. The inner face of the walls was plastered (about 7 cm thick),

so that the plaster also covered the connection between the walls and the floors. One was plastered on both sides with white plaster mixed with shells, and two openings were identified in it, clay pipes, which drained the cells to the central treading floor (**Fig. 7**).



Fig. 7.

A clay pipe which drained the cells to the central treading floor, looking west (photographer: Assaf Peretz).

From the main treading floor, a plastered channel led to an oval filtration vat, with a small settling pit at the bottom, which is in fact the lower part of a clay jar (**Fig. 8**). The filtration vat was paved with white industrial mosaic, and many repairs were made to it on pottery using the *opus spicatum* method. From the central filtration vat the liquid was poured on two collecting vats to the west and east of it. The collecting vats have an octagonal outline and are plastered with white plaster. Inside each vat there is a sedimentation pit and at the bottom is a small

den—the base of a clay jar. The collecting vats were also paved with mosaic and corrections of *opus spicatum* were identified.



Fig. 8.

The filtration vat and the eastern collecting vat, looking north
(photographer: Assaf Perez).

Access to the collecting vats was made through two staircases, bounded by walls. Between the stairs there is a wall with a plastered shelf next to it. The vats area is bounded by walls; the lower and thicker part of the walls is built of fieldstones, similar to the foundation of the treading floor, and the upper and narrow part is made of gray bonding material made of small stones, shells and plaster. This is how the other walls in this complex are built. In some places, dents inside the bonding material could be seen, indicating the location of the fieldstones in the past. The walls were plastered on the inside, except for two walls that were plastered on both sides. Two stages of plastering were discerned: white plaster with pink plaster on it.

At least three phases of paving were identified in the mosaic floor around the vats: white industrial mosaic stones with weathering, colored industrial mosaic stones (white, black, red) and pottery (*opus spicatum*). A lot of fragments of roof tiles were found in the fillings that

blocked the collecting vats, and in general in all the excavation areas. The pottery found in the vicinity of the winepress, in the fillings that canceled it and in the accumulations that covered it, dated mainly to the fifth century CE.⁴

At an unknown period, probably after the winepress was out of use, a kiln for pottery was built in the western collecting vat (**Figs. 9, 10**). East of the kiln, above the eastern collecting vat, was probably an infrastructure made of white and compacted calcareous material, which covered the eastern vat, about half of the middle filtration vat and the mosaic floor around the filtration vat and around the eastern part of the eastern collecting vat, where the kiln was built. The infrastructure appears to have been used as a work surface while the kiln was in use. The infrastructure covered only half of the filtration vat, as its western half was used for descent to build the kiln's combustion chamber (**Fig. 11**).



Fig. 9.

A pottery kiln that was built in the western collecting vat, looking north
(photographer: Assaf Perez).

⁴ The dating to the fifth century is based on pottery. At this stage of the study, it is not possible to accurately date the time of construction of the winepress and the various stages identified in it. Plaster samples were taken from the winepress and from the pool that was exposed in the nearby building. Further research may be able to give an accurate dating of the elements discussed.



Fig. 10.

A pottery kiln that was built in the western collecting vat, looking north-west (photographer: Assaf Peretz).

Discussion

The large winepress at Gan Ha-Darom was built with considerable investment in massive infrastructure, walls and stairs. In the winepress, several stages of mosaic floor repairs were made by inlaying new mosaic stones or by inlaying pottery (*opus spicatum*)—a technology that began in the Roman period and lasted until the Byzantine period. The pottery repairs were also identified in facilities located to the north; in some of the installations, the collecting vats were paved only with this method, and in some, mosaic stones and pottery were incorporated. It is possible that the reason for the use of pottery was a shortage of raw material for creating mosaic. The large winepress could produce very large quantities of wine for export.

Antiguo Oriente, volumen 18, 2020, pp. 287–320.



Fig. 11

A pottery kiln that was built in the western collecting vat and the descent passage used to develop the kiln's combustion chamber, looking west (photographer: Assaf Peretz).

It seems that the cells west of the central treading floor were originally covered, and were used for fermenting must that flowed through an opening in the cell ceiling, above which there was a treading floor—a second floor, which did not survive—on which the grapes were trodden (**Fig. 12**). One possibility is that the must flowed directly into the fermentation chamber, and after the fermentation was finished, through the clay pipes leading to the treading floor, from there to the plastered channel, which led to the filtration vat and from there to one of the collecting vats. The remains of the grapes were transferred from the tread to the central treading floor, were squeezed through the screw press. Then the liquid was transferred to the second collecting vat.⁵

⁵ Dray 2011: 89; 2015.

Another possibility is that the must runs from the upper treading floor on the second floor, through a small hole in the ceiling of the fermentation chamber, into jars placed through the “window” in its front wall and installed under the small hole, so that the fermentation was actually done inside jars. It is accepted by scholars that the second fermentation took place in jars that had a hole in the shoulder for the gas to escape.⁶ This possibility is less plausible, in our opinion, because according to the sources there is evidence that strong wines continued to ferment after being transferred to various jars, and even broke the jars in which they were stored. Accordingly, we assume that the fermentation was carried out in the cells or in the collecting vats. The Gemara discusses the halakha of exposure with regard to various foods and beverages. The Sages taught:

*Wine that is still fermenting is not subject to the halakha of exposure. And how long is its fermentation process? It is three days. Cress-based dishes are not subject to the halakha of exposure, but the residents of the Diaspora are accustomed to treating them as prohibited if they were left exposed. And we said this only in a case where the dishes do not contain vinegar; but if they do contain vinegar, the vinegar repels the snakes, and in such a situation even the inhabitants of the Diaspora do not treat them as prohibited.*⁷

To the north of the central treading floor, trenches were identified, probably of the walls of cells that were north to the main treading floor and according to parallels, perhaps also to the east, possibly additional fermentation chambers (see **Fig. 12**) or cells for storing tools and jars. Complex wineries began to appear in the middle of the fifth century CE, at the height of the Byzantine period. These wineries contain a rather complex system and are the pinnacle of technology in wine production. In fact, these facilities made it possible, among other things, to produce large quantities of good quality wine.⁸ The wine pro-

⁶ See for example Gudovitch 2009: 207.

⁷ Talmudic tractate, *Avoda Zara* 30: 2.

⁸ Avrutis 2015: 42–54.

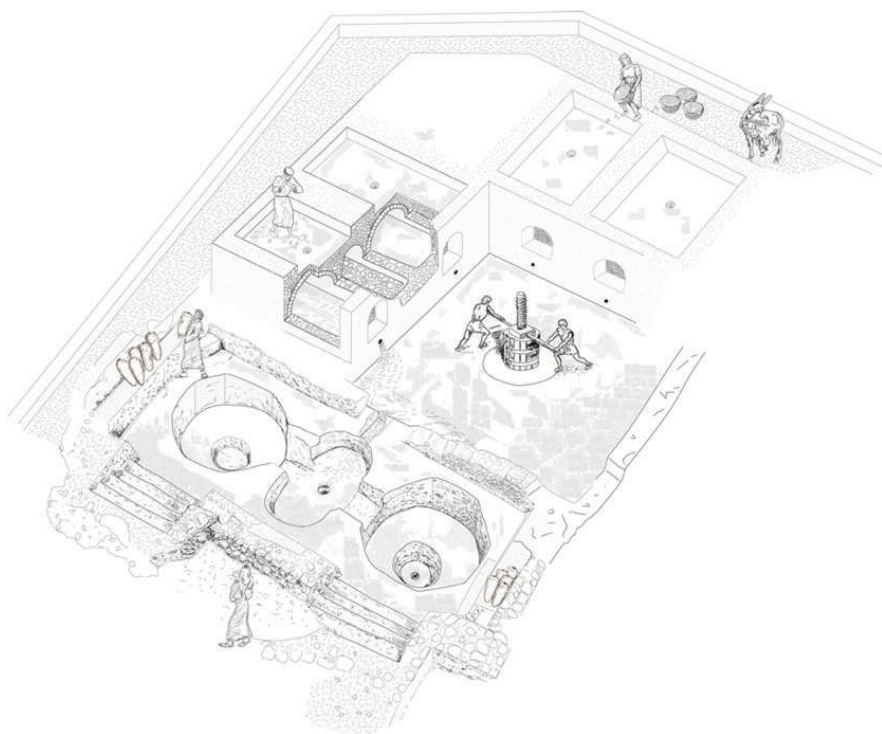


Fig. 12.

Restoration proposal for the winepress
(drawing: Rivka Mishayev).

duction process in the winery was based on gravity. In other words, installations were built so that the flow process was possible from a high to a low place, hence its beginning at the top and its end at the bottom.⁹ Most wineries were found mainly in estates, villages, or the periphery around major cities. These wineries are relatively spacious and large¹⁰ and although they are not similar to each other they have common characteristics and features. Five main components form the cornerstone of any complex winepress: a large treading floor, two collecting vats and a common intermediate vat—the filtration vat, a screw press or a squeezing device and sub-surfaces.

⁹ Dray 2011: 2015.

¹⁰ Avrutis 2015: 42–54.

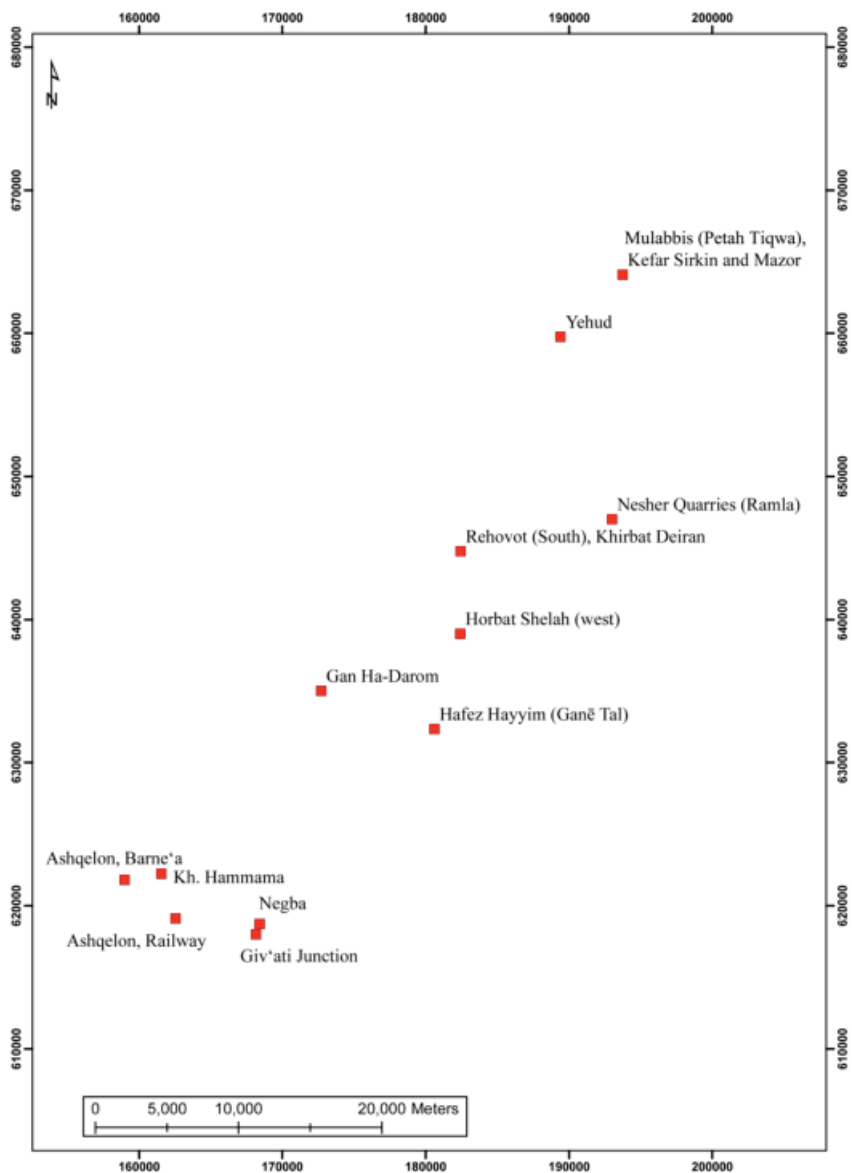


Fig. 13.
Map of the distribution of the elaborate winepresses
(map design: Angelina Dagot).

At the beginning of the study, a proposal was made to attribute these types of wineries to southern ones due to their large distribution in the Negev region and the southern coastal plain. Following the development of the study, additional cases were discovered in other areas that indicated a wider spread of facilities.¹¹ There are two types of elaborate wineries with one or two collecting vats.¹² Prominent features are sub-cells separated by an indoor treading floor, octagonal collecting vats and an oval-shaped filtration vat. Octagonal collecting vats were mainly exposed in the southern coastal plain (see above; **Fig. 13**). The construction of these collecting vats is considered more complicated than the “classic,” round or square shapes. Moreover, the multiplicity of corners is also a disadvantage due to the multiplicity of waste accumulated on them. It is therefore likely that the purpose of their construction was mainly aesthetic.¹³ As part of this work, some wineries will be presented, both with octagonal collecting vats and with “classic” shapes with similar characteristics.¹⁴

Kh. Hammama

Two winepresses were documented, north of structures, some of which were apparently used for residence. A western winepress that was almost completely discovered and its dimensions (12 × 17 m) were the same as that discovered in Gan Ha-Darom. The winepress has a treading floor, four fermentation chambers, a filtration vat and two collecting vats. The walls of the winepress were built as a casting of fieldstones and cement and then plastered. In the center of a treading floor lays a base for a squeezing screw, but it was dislodged along with the flooring apparently for reuse. Two pairs of squeezing or fermentation chambers were built on the northern and western sides of the treading floor, between which a lead pipe was connected. From the treading floor, the must flowed into a rec-

¹¹ Avshalom-Gorni, Frankel and Getzov 2008.

¹² Dray 2011; 2015.

¹³ ‘Ad 2011.

¹⁴ For comprehensive comparative studies on winepresses exposed in Eretz Israel, see Frankel 1999 and Ayalon *et al.* 2009.

tangular settling basin with rounded corners. On both sides of the basin, octagonal collecting vats were built, with a basin at the bottom. The descent to each of the vats was made from the south through three plastered steps. Near the western collecting vat, a number of round cells were built that were probably used for storage or a work area. The winepress was filled with brown alluvial soil and dune sand and appeared to have been deliberately filled. The eastern winepress was partially excavated, and in fact the remains of cement-bonded potsherds were preserved, indicating the location of a central treading floor. A collecting vat smaller than those discovered in the western winepress was discovered south of the treading floor. It is likely that this winepress was used to produce a smaller amount of wine and may even be of a different variety. This phenomenon probably existed in Gan Ha-Darom, where a large central winepress with a significantly lower production capacity was discovered next to a large central installation. It is possible that these wineries were used to create a different type of wine and may even be more selected or more expensive.¹⁵

The “Third Mile Estate”

The site is located 500 m southwest of Kh. Hammama. At the site were an agricultural estate and a cemetery from the Byzantine period. The estate complex included a bathhouse, pools (one of them for raising fish), warehouses, a pottery kiln and two winepresses. One winepress (130 sq m) was built next to the bathhouse. The treading floor (5.5 × 5.8 m) paved with marble and in the center was a pit for a screw. Five square cells of the same size (1.5 × 3.5 m) were identified around the stone base of the treading floor. Another square cell (1.1 × 2.3 m) was discovered a short distance west of the treading floor. Walls separated the treading floor from the cells, that were built on a different level. In the center of the walls remains of a channel were identified, through which must have passed. The excavators believed that the cells were originally covered and above them was another treading floor. Two square collecting vats (2.5 × 2.4 m and depth 2 m) and an oval filtration

¹⁵ Taxel *et al.* 2019.

vat (1.2×2.5 m, depth 1 m) were identified in the northeastern part of the treading floor.¹⁶

Another winepress that was discovered is larger than its neighbor (220 sq m) and belongs to a rare type of octagonal collecting vats. The winepress was built in the natural soil. A central treading floor (6.5×6.5 m, 42.25 sq m) was paved with marble and in the center was a stone that surrounded a hole that served as a base for a screw-type squeezing device. The inner face was covered with hydraulic plaster. A plastered surface was discovered near the southeast corner of the treading floor, which continued to a nearby warehouse. In the southwestern and northeastern part of a treading floor were probably four square cells. The cells were separated from the treading floor by a massive wall. There were canals that connected through the wall to the central treading floor, allowing the wine to flow into it. The cells were not adjacent to each other and were separated by a stone-covered surface. The filtration vat and the collecting vats were lower than the treading floor. The treading floor was lower than the cells that surrounded it, and they seemed to drain into it. Apparently this winepress operated similarly to the one found in Gan Ha-Darom.

Ashqelon, Railway

Along the route of the ancient Via Maris an estate complex was excavated. The complex included a large building, possibly the home of a wealthy family, a storehouse or part of a monastery, as well as a winepress and an industrial pottery-production area, of which only the refuse pits were exposed. The construction of the estate began in the early Byzantine period, and it continued to be occupied until the end of the Byzantine period. The winepress was similar to winepresses with octagonal collecting vats, but was characterized by a single octagonal collecting vat, and is a particular case of winepress of this type. The winepress (9×10 m) was sealed with double-faced walls built of two rows of stones, with small stones between them. The winepress has a

¹⁶ Israel and Erickson-Gini 2013.

treading floor with a screw in the center, a single collecting vat depicting an octagon and two cells, probably for fermentation.¹⁷

Ashqelon, Barne'a

Remains of a church and three winepresses from the Byzantine period were exposed about three kilometers north of Ashkelon. So far, one winepress has been published. The winepress was almost entirely preserved. The complex of the Winepress was hewn in *kurkar* and comprised a work surface, pressing areas and two vats. The treading floor (5 × 6 m) was paved with different size marble tiles and stones in secondary use, with coarse white tesserae incorporated between them. An elliptical vat for a screw was cut in the treading floor's pavement. The walls were built of small stones and gray cement. Four fermentation cells were located around the treading floor. The two cells south of the surface (1.25 × 2.70 m, depth 0.6 m), coated with pinkish gray plaster, were partly paved with stone tiles and partly coated with gray plaster; the two cells to the west of the surface were paved with large white tesserae. Lead pipes connected the floors of the cells to the treading floor. Pottery sherds covered with mortar were discovered above the cells' floors and may indicate that a second treading floor was located above them. Two vats were exposed to the east of the work surface, a settling pit in south and a collecting vat in the north. The settling pit was paved with different size marble and limestone slabs that were apparently removed from a large building and pottery sherds were incorporated in-between them. The sides of the pit were coated with two layers of gray plaster. The must flowed to the settling pit both from the pressing floor and, by way of a hole that was blocked, from the screw. The must flowed to the collecting vat through a lead pipe that was set inside a semicircular niche in the northern side of the settling pit. The sides and floor of the collecting vat were also built of different size stones and marble slabs in secondary use and coated with gray plaster.¹⁸

¹⁷ Varga 2018.

¹⁸ Varga 2010.

Hafez Hayyim (Ganē Tal)

A large winepress complex dating to the sixth-seventh centuries CE was exposed on the northern slope of a low hill. The winepress included a large square treading floor, a filtration vat, two collecting vats and secondary surfaces. The treading floor (6.5×6.8 m) was paved with a white mosaic that was laid on a bedding of small stones, *wadi* (dry stream) pebbles and light gray lime-based mortar. The pit in the middle of the floor was apparently used for the stone base of a press screw, which has been robbed. A filtration vat, installed to the west of the treading floor, was flanked on either side by collecting vats. A perforated hole, through which the must flowed via a niche to the collecting vats, was installed in the middle of the northern and southern walls of the filtration vat. The octagonal collecting vats (length per side *ca.* 1.3 m, depth 1.2 m) were coated with hydraulic plaster and paved with a mosaic. A circular sump, whose sides were slanted and coated with hydraulic plaster and its floor paved with a mosaic, was installed in the center of each of the collecting vats. A Gaza jar, whose upper part is missing or has been deliberately removed in antiquity, was exposed in the northern sump. A mosaic floor was exposed around the filtration vat and the collecting vats. Four secondary surfaces were discovered north and east of the treading floor. The surfaces were paved with a mosaic that was laid on square fired mud bricks, set on a bedding of small stones and *wadi* pebbles, mixed with light gray lime-based mortar. The secondary surfaces were surrounded by walls that were built of small and medium fieldstones. The secondary surfaces were higher than the treading floor and sloped in its direction. A perforated hole in the middle of the wall that separated it from the treading floor was exposed in each of the secondary surfaces. It seems that the winepress was surrounded by at least six secondary surfaces.¹⁹

¹⁹ ‘Ad 2011.

Negba

Remains of a residential complex or mansion from the Byzantine period were exposed *ca.* 12 km southeast of Ashkelon, and an elaborate winepress (15 × 10 m) was exposed next to it. Its walls were built from a mixture of cement, stones and shells. The winepress had a central treading floor (6 × 6 m), with a stone foundation on which a mosaic floor was laid. In the center of the treading floor was a pit that was used to install the stone base of a screw-type squeezing device made of wood. A channel that drained the must into an oval filtration vat (1.7 × m, depth 0.6 m) was identified at the bottom of the vat, with a white mosaic-paved settling pit. To the north and south, the filtration vat was continuing under the now missing floor through two pipes to octagonal collecting vats (3 × 3 m, depth 1.2 m and 1.15 m). These vats were of almost equal sizes with round basins, identified in two stages and they were paved with mosaic. Five cells were built around the treading floor, which were probably built at a later stage. The cells were not adjacent to each other. From the cells must drains to the central treading floor through lead pipes. Meiron,²⁰ believed that the grapes were stored there before they were pressed, but it is not impossible that they were placed there in order to create a natural fermentation of the fruit (this according to Dray).²¹

Giv'ati Junction

On the road from Ashkelon to Qiryat Gat, *ca.* 1 km southeast of Kh. 'Ajjis er-Ras, where a Byzantine settlement was partially exposed, an industrial winepress was excavated and reconstructed. The winepress was dated to the Byzantine period; has two cells paved with a lime-based clay substrate with stone slabs on it. The cells have a common wall and from it came two channels that connected the cells to a treading floor. A space between the two cells was sealed with a wide wall

²⁰ Meiron 2009.

²¹ Dray 2015.

built of medium-sized fieldstones. The treading floor was partially preserved (6.5×4.7 – 6.5 m), its flooring was robbed and its foundations were stone slabs. The walls of the cells and the treading floor were built of pure bricks and covered with hydraulic plaster. In the center of the treading floor was a socket in which a screw was placed. A plastered trench led to a filtration vat. The filtration vat was partially preserved (1.4 – 1.6×1.5 m), its shape was trapezoidal and it was paved with stone slabs covered with plaster, as well as its walls. In the center of the vat was a round sump made of a clay jug. Two partially exposed collecting vats were documented on both sides of the filtration vat. The collecting vat had a rectangular outline (2.4×3.0 , depth 1.3 m) and its sides were covered with hydraulic plaster; In the center of its floor are two single-core plastered depressions. A step was built around the collecting vat and at its western end was a work surface. The second vat was not preserved, except for a corner, but was probably like the first. The finds from the winepress date to the Byzantine, Umayyad and Abbasid periods and it seems that the complex continued to exist in the early Islamic period.²²

Rehovot (South), Khirbat Deiran

At Khirbat Deiran remains were excavated ranging in date from the Roman period to the Early Islamic period, including three settlement strata, installations, burial caves and a winepress. The winepress was dated to the Byzantine period; included a central treading floor, a filtration vat with a sump made of pottery jar and two collecting vats with double sumps.²³ Around the main treading floor with a screw press base, there were six cells drained to it in tubes and between them were additional treading floors, perhaps for laying the grapes. It appears that above some of the cells were additional treading floors. The upper cells were paved with mosaic. A drainage opening was installed in the floor of each cell that led to the smaller cell below it. Most researchers

²² Paran 2009.

²³ Roll and Ayalon 1981; Barkan 2014.

believe the upper cells surrounding the treading floor served for placing the grapes prior to pressing. The must that collected in these cells flowed into the bottom cells by way of the openings; this was considered the choicest must.²⁴ According to Dray,²⁵ the fermentation process occurred in the upper cells and the wine was conveyed via the bottom cells and the treading floor to the collecting vats.

Horbat Shelah (west)

An industrial winepress was discovered in an agricultural area west of Horbat Shelah (**Fig. 14**). This winepress is similar to a facility discovered in Ashqelon and has one octagonal collecting vat.²⁶ As in Ashqelon, this is a particular case of wineries with octagonal collecting vats. It began with a simple winepress and continued with its transformation into a complex industrial one, hence in fact these are two phases of construction that date to the sixth-seventh centuries CE. The beginning of the winepress in Horbat Shelah is in a treading floor and a collecting vat. The treading floor (9.5×10.9 m) was paved with white mosaic, most of which was not preserved. The mosaic rug was laid on a foundation built of small stones and cement. From the treading floor, the liquids drained into a square collecting vat (3.0×3.2 m). It is probable that around the collecting vat was a paved surface from which not much was preserved. In the second phase of construction, it was decided to convert the winepress into an industrial one, mainly by adding cells (0.8×2 , depth 1.4 m) on the eastern and southern side of the treading floor. The cells were paved with mosaic and their walls were covered with a thick layer of plaster. In each of the cells, in the area on the roof, a treading floor paved with mosaic was built. The cells were open at the top and had tubes that led to the central treading. The screw stood in the center of a lowered treading floor (5.4×5.5 m), apparently at a later stage, as part of the addition of cells. In the center of the treading floor was a

²⁴ Dray 2011; 2015.

²⁵ Ayalon, Frankel and Kloner 2013: 23.

²⁶ Varga 2018.

square basin and the remains of a lead pipe that connected to one of the cells on one side and another pipe that connected to a filtration vat to the west. The filtration vat (1.1×1.6 m, depth 0.7 m) like the rest of the installation was covered with a thick layer of plaster and to the east connected through a ditch to the base of the screw in the center of a central reading floor. An octagonal collecting vat was built within the walls of the square collecting vat from the earliest stage. Its sides are covered with a layer of plaster and the floor is mosaic and in fact built in the same way as a work surface. At the space between the early (square) and the late (octagonal) phase small stones and bonding material were inserted.²⁷

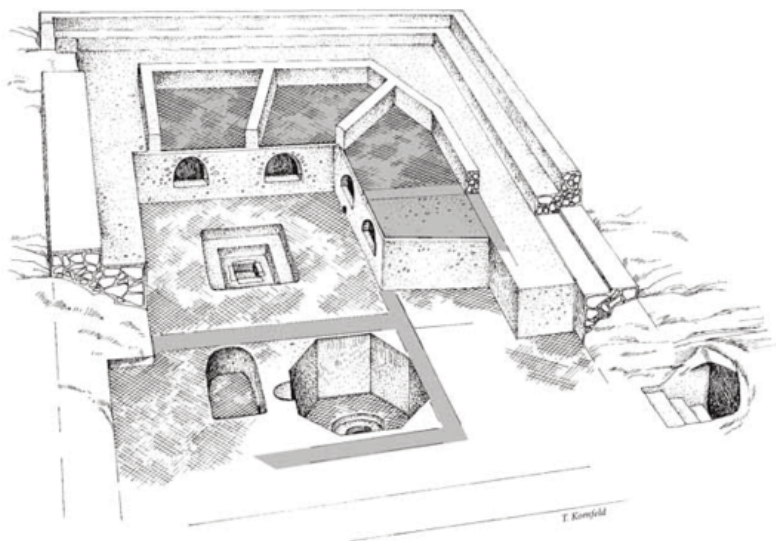


Fig. 14.

Restoration proposal for the winepress at Horbat Shelah (courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority; Draft: Tina Korenfeld; Haiman 2009).

Nesher Quarries (Ramla)

The site is located in the Lod Valley, near the cities of Ramla and Lod. During the excavations that were carried out in recent decades, 14

²⁷ Haiman 2009.

wineries of different types and periods have been discovered. The largest and most impressive of the complex winepresses contained ten cells, seven of which were well preserved and had two levels—open upper cells and vaulted lower ones. Its walls are built of fieldstones trapped in cement. The upper floors of the cells, which were around the treading floor, were of different sizes. All the floors were covered with white mosaic and their walls were plastered. Each of the cells has a tube that drains the liquids to the lower level. The winepress has a treading floor (6.35×7 m) whose floor is partly built of stones and partly a mosaic, above a foundation. In the center of the treading floor was a square stone that served as a base for a screw-type press. A clay pipe drain the screw base and the liquids were drained to a round middle filtration vat (diameter 1.55 m, depth 0.6 m), the bottom of which was partly covered with stones and partly with mosaic. A collecting vat was located nearby (diameter 2.6, depth 1.55 m). The winepress dates between the fifth and eighth centuries CE.²⁸

Yehud

Remains of a large house and a complex winepress (225 sq m) dating to the Byzantine period were discovered. The winepress had a large treading floor flanked by rectangular cells to the south and east, filtration vat and two collecting vats to the north. The main treading floor (7.5×8.5 m) was rectangular and paved with an industrial mosaic. The treading floor's foundation was an aggregate consisting of stones and mortar (thickness 0.5 m). Since the central part of the treading floor, where the screw is usually installed in this type of winepress, was not remaining, it is impossible to determine with certainty if a screw was indeed used to produce the must. The must flowed from the treading floor to a plastered channel in the middle of the northern wall of the floor, and from there to the filtration vat and to the two adjacent collecting vats. The filtration vat was circular (diam. 1.5 m) and octagonal

²⁸ Avrutis 2015: 42–54.

collecting vats (diam. 3.1 m) were built on either side of it. The excavator assumes that the side cells were likely used for producing must by means of a secondary process. A niche was exposed near the western collecting vat, which was built of ashlar, might also have been used for pressing grapes. Four rectangular cells (*ca.* 1.6 × 2.6 m, max. depth *ca.* 1 m) were discovered south and east of the main treading floor; however, there seems to have originally been five cells. The cells were built near each other, *ca.* 1.6 m apart. The excavator assumes that the spaces between them were probably used to transfer the produce between the cells. The cells were treated with white plaster and paved with a white industrial mosaic. They drained into a gutter that led to the main treading floor. Each cell had three niches which had a stone tile at their bottom. The niches were probably used as a base for a raised treading floor. The excavator assumes that the cells were probably used as storage spaces and for the initial aging of the must. This winepress probably went out of use in the late sixth or early seventh century CE, and from the Abbasid period was used as a refuse pit.²⁹

Mulabbis (Petah Tiqwa), Kefar Sirkin and Mazor

During the 1990s, two wineries were excavated near Mulabbis (Petah Tiqwa), Kefar Sirkin and Mazor. A complex winepress built on two levels (13.5 × 15.7 m) and dated to the Byzantine period was exposed in the village of Sirkin. The winepress has a treading floor with a basin for establishing the screw, a filtration vat that connects with a large collecting vat and ten storage compartments. The walls of the facility were not preserved and are therefore likely to have been looted in a later period. It seems, therefore, that these preserved elements were composed of dressed stones and fieldstones trapped in cement and pebbles. In the center of the winepress was a treading floor (5.9 × 5.9 m). The floor was covered with white mosaic and appears to have been repaired at least once. A trapezoidal vat (0.5 × 0.56 × 0.6 m, depth 0.6 m) inside

²⁹ Korenfeld and Bar-Nathan 2014.

which a screw was installed was placed in the center of the treading floor. A wall was built to the west of the treading floor, to the south of which was a narrow canal made of stone. This canal connected the treading floor to a round filtration vat (0.8×0.85 m, depth 0.75) whose sides were covered with several layers of partially preserved hydraulic plaster and a mosaic floor. From the filtration vat, the liquids drained into a relatively large round collecting vat (2.3–2.5 m, depth 1.6 m), the sides of which were covered with a layer of plaster and the mosaic floor. In the center of the vat is a sump and in its northern part a round stone step, possibly a column in secondary use. Southwest of the collecting vat is a square plastered installation. Two additional collecting vats (1.36×0.43 m, 1×0.3 m) were discovered on the treading floor in its eastern part. The walls of the collecting vats were covered with hydraulic plaster and in the center was a hollow with a mosaic floor. Ten rounded cells, of various sizes, separated by walls, plastered and paved with mosaic, were discovered around a treading floor. These cells were at a higher level than that of the central treading floor, which allowed liquid to drain from the high to the low.

In the nearby Mazor, another complex winepress was discovered similar to the one in Sirkin. The winepress had a treading floor (6.2×6.4 m) from which a foundation made of stones and plaster preserved, and it is likely that it had a mosaic floor. In the center of the treading floor was a square basin that formed the foundation for the screw. A long clay trench (3.7 m, diameter 0.25–0.3 m) was identified in the southern wall of the basin and carried liquids to a round collecting vat (diameter 2.5 m, depth 1.5). In the center of the vat is a small dent. At a later stage the collecting vat served as a cistern, by filling the canal with plaster. From the treading floor, a plastered channel led to a small filtration vat (1.25×1.25 , depth 1.0 m) that also connected to the collecting vat. Eight cells were discovered around the treading floor, seven of which were preserved. The cells were covered with plaster and a mosaic floor.³⁰ In Mulabbis three winepresses were excavated.³¹

³⁰ Sidi, Amit and ‘Ad 2003.

³¹ Gudovitch 2009.

According to the excavator, there were six or nine fermentation cells around the winepresses. Above the cells were mosaic-paved surfaces, which were used to storage the grapes. The weight of the grapes produced the must, which flowed into the fermentation cell (or jars).

Conclusions

The current archeological excavation conducted at Gan Ha-Darom revealed an industrial zone that operated during the Byzantine period, in the fourth-fifth centuries CE. The industrial zone includes a large building divided into four spaces, including a pool that indicates that the building served as an integral part of the site's industry. To the east of the building, a large elaborate winepress was exposed. The collecting vats of the winepress have an octagonal outline and are plastered with white plaster. Collecting vats of this type are a particular and special case. The reason for the outline is probably merely aesthetic although it may have a broader meaning. The number of facilities for this type of outline is very small and contains individual units throughout the country. Their main concentration is in the south of Israel, although in recent years it seems that their geographical distribution is wider. Access to the collecting vats was via two staircases. In most of the installations that have been uncovered so far in the Holy Land, no stairs have been found or have not been preserved, so this winepress is unusual. In the fillings that blocked the collecting vats, and in general in all the excavation areas, many fragments of roof tiles were found, possibly suggesting the roofing of the complex. To the north of the winepress was a round foundation built of stones, which may have served as a base for a wooden pillar that did not survive, which held the roof. The pottery finds from the vicinity of the winepress, the fillings that eliminated it and the accumulations that covered it, date mainly to the fifth century CE.

A kiln for pottery was built in one of the collecting vats. This phenomenon is also unique to this case. It was suggested that the kiln and the winepress existed at the same time, and that the kiln was used

to create jars intended for wine produced in the winepress. The kiln and the winepress do not appear to have operated simultaneously, the reasons for this: (1) East of the kiln opening there was a need for an operating area for the introduction of combustion materials, as well as removal of the Jars produced in the kiln; (2) An environment of a kiln is a polluted environment, shrouded in soot and smoke and it does not appear to be suitable for an environment of wine production; (3) If the installations had worked together we would have found a lot of burnt material and kiln debris inside the vats of the winepress during the excavation, and no kiln debris was found inside the vats because they were intentionally clogged during the kiln construction phase.

Complex wineries such as the one discovered in Gan Ha-Darom began to appear in the middle of the fifth century CE, in the Byzantine period. These wineries contain a rather complex system and are the pinnacle of technology in wine production. Most winepresses were found in estates, villages or the periphery around major cities of the period, including Jerusalem, Ashkelon, Gaza, Jaffa, Lod or Amman. In many cases, such as in a winepress that was exposed in Gan Ha-Darom, the winepresses were attached to the complexes of a monastery or a church. A study of the installations exposed north of the winepress, in the estate/monastery complex, may provide an understanding of why they were used and whether they were used at one time or at different stages in the Byzantine period, in the fourth-fifth centuries CE.

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RESEÑAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS / BOOK REVIEWS

DAVID WENGROW, *The Origins of Monsters: Image and Cognition in the First Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. The Rostovtzeff Lectures. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2020. xviii + 162 pp. ISBN 9780691202396 (paperback). USD 35.00.

While *The Origins of Monsters* is not by any means a new book (it was published in 2013), its recent paperback re-issue provides us with an excellent opportunity to discuss its contents, especially since the original hardback and e-book printing had such an impact on researchers from various fields and generated a great deal of discussion. Dozens of reviewers published generally positive remarks and a “book club” was organised to debate this book. But however extensive and stimulating this feedback may have been, the new issue is an exact reproduction of the original text. Whilst this may be so for editorial reasons, it also serves as a strong indication that both Wengrow and his publishing house are confident that the original text did not need any revisions. I would like to examine, in the next few paragraphs, if this is indeed the case.

Despite the sensational title, Wengrow makes it clear early enough that he will not be discussing “monsters” nor their “origins,” and is in turn much more interested in how images composed of different animal parts are transmitted between different cultures. There is a simple reason why he prefers to write about “composites”: he sees the creation of visual *corpora* of non-factual beings as an experiment in which body parts of different, real species are combined into images of animals that have no counterpart in the “real” world. These compelling and counterintuitive images are somehow ideal for transmission, and the main concern of his book is to determine how these images are transmitted and why. He realises, following ideas from cognitive psychology, that it has something to do with their status as (minimally) counterintuitive images, but he wants to test this hypothesis and expand it to better suit the data from archaeological and historical sources.

The ideas that make up *The Origins of Monsters* had been brewing for at least a decade, but they were not put to paper until he came across the final influence that cemented his argument. He found this influence in some ideas belonging to Mikhail Rostovtzeff, which he discusses in Chapter 1.

Rostovtzeff, a blatant anti-Marxist historian of culture, first studied how visual representations of monsters crossed cultural boundaries and were received and appropriated in *milieux* so distant as China and Celtic Europe. His approach was one that centred around commercial routes and networks rather than individual communities, hence an adequate point of departure for a study that also pretends to be general in scope.

A century has passed since Rostovtzeff shared his ideas, and new methods have been devised to better study behavioural patterns at the level of populations, rather than of individuals. For this reason, he devotes Chapter 2 to discussing the “epidemiology of culture,” a method based on cognitive science studies and their claim that our perception of the world is shaped by a “modular pattern of cognition.” This modular thinking explains why composites are built from “modules” intuitively known to populations and not through some other procedure that would completely violate the laws of intuitive biology.

At this point, Wengrow sets out to ward off any possible objections, the most obvious being that biologically counterintuitive animal representations have been known to occur millennia before the 6th millennium BC, in which he places the origin of monsters. This is dealt with in Chapter 3, where he analyses Palaeolithic “composites,” and decides against considering them in his study due to them not being widely transmitted and also not being common enough. Whereas in Neolithic Mesopotamia and Egypt, composites thrived and expanded rapidly. This is of course his area of expertise, a fact that accounts for a well-informed and documented argument.

From Chapter 4 onwards we begin to comprehend the originality of Wengrow’s account. Until this point, he expatiated on the theoretical tools which he will use to tackle the topic of composites in the Ancient world. It should be noted that not only are there very few scholarly accounts on this particular topic, but he intends to build upon the theoretical foundations on which his work is based. According to cognitive science, as he discussed it in the former chapters, minimally counter-intuitiveness should account for the success in composite transmission, but throughout human history that appears not always to be the case, and Wengrow observes that the expansion does happen in very specific contexts or “cultural ecologies,” as he chooses to call them. These are all urban contexts, so he links composite transference to urban development, a topic much discussed in his other books. With the advent of cities, of course, came commerce, and in this sense it is relevant to point out the use of composites in seal impressions of clear bureaucratic nature, thus (in Wengrow’s view)

proving the point made by Rostovtzeff a hundred years prior. Here he collects a series of later examples of composite transference, such as the adoption of the Egyptian fertility goddess Tawret by Levantine and insular Greek peoples, also related to the development of cities.

Still needing to account for the specific ways in which the transference happens throughout history, Chapter 5 is devoted to the devices that make such images mobile. Following the famous formula by Walter Benjamin, he calls this propitious context the “First age of mechanical reproduction,” and associates it to the same bureaucratic thought he discussed earlier, especially when it comes to cylinder seals and the administration of commerce by an elite. Both technological and political innovations seem to be prerequisites for composite dissemination, but the specific modes in which that transmission is made are discussed in Chapter 6. Here he identifies three modes of transference: transformative, in which traditional conventions are disrupted by the arrival of exotic goods; integrative, which tends to blend diverse visual conventions into an “international” style; and the Protective mode that forms a barrier against external threats through composite imagery. Each of these modes is illustrated with informative and relevant examples.

Before the final notes and an extensive Bibliography that may well serve as an initial approach to whoever is exposed for the first time to the wide range of topics discussed in the book, Wengrow advances some conclusions. He evaluates again the original hypothesis of the book, namely that composites, as minimally counterintuitive images, are fecund for cultural transmission, which he claims to have proved and furthered. He then advances another hypothesis, which stemmed from the examples discussed in the last chapter, and that is that the specific dynamics of elite culture are the fundamental motor in the transmission of composites. It is an interesting proposal, albeit somehow estranged from the cognitive psychology basis that he claimed throughout the book.

The writing in this book is as compelling as a piece of scholarly writing can be, the arguments are presented in an elegant and orderly fashion, and it weaves together ideas drawn from different disciplines rather effortlessly. Wengrow strings them out in a compact yet convincing argument, both for scholars and the general public, boasting a surprising internal coherence throughout. With less than two hundred pages printed in a big, bold typeface, an affordable paperback edition was the only ingredient lacking in order to make a non-fiction best-seller.

As stated above, a volume was compiled in 2016 under the name of *The Origins of Monsters' Book Club*, consisting entirely of discussions around Wengrow's book and published on-line by the International Cognition and Culture Institute. Members of this Institute naturally share certain preconceptions, so only minor, superficial objections are bound to arise. Three main objections are thus eschewed, also explaining why the new edition is an exact reproduction of the old one.

Wengrow does allude to certain "disagreements" with Philippe Descola, but sadly never discloses their nature. A cognitive approach that understands the mind as a machine that uses internal laws to process an outside world in which creation it plays no part is the exact opposite of the interests of Descola, namely to challenge the Cartesian dichotomy between subject and object and between mind and world. In this sense, the idea of "real" animals as opposed to "unreal" is not at all universal. Thus, "minimally counter-intuitive images" would not depend on hard-wired mental and biological capacities but on social conceptions, continually being constructed and reconstructed. Some of this is hinted at in the Conclusions, but in a veiled way.

The second issue that cognitive scientists have overlooked is the absence of human agency in the process of creation, transmission and adoption of composites. Human behaviour, from the standpoint of cognitive psychology, is deeply wired in our brain, and little can we do to change this. And finally, they understand the image as an object of recognition, so the existence of a "real life" prototype is never really questioned, making composites more difficult to understand.

This new edition of Wengrow's book might then provide scholars in the fields of Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian iconography with the perfect excuse for a long due discussion about human agency and imagination in the making of monsters.

SEBASTIÁN FRANCISCO MAYDANA
Universidad de Buenos Aires

ANTONIO SAGONA, *The Archaeology of the Caucasus: From Earliest Settlements to the Iron Age*. Cambridge World Archaeology. Cambridge, University of Cambridge. 2018, xx + 541 pp, ISBN 978-1-107-01659-0 (paperback). USD 113.83.

El libro que pasamos a reseñar forma parte de la colección *Cambridge World Archaeology*, dirigida por Norman Yoffee (Universidad de Michigan, Estados Unidos de América), que al día de la fecha incluye obras dedicadas a la Arqueología de Siria, de Chipre, de Arabia, de Elam, y de Palestina durante la Edad del Bronce, entre otras. En esta oportunidad, se presenta una Arqueología del Cáucaso, desde el Paleolítico Superior hasta la Edad de Hierro I. Se trata, sin dudas, de un gran desafío, pues el Cáucaso es una región compleja, donde no sólo interactúa el mundo europeo y próximo oriental, sino que se caracteriza también por una marcada heterogeneidad, tanto geográfica como cultural y política. En términos estrictos, se refiere al territorio ocupado hoy por tres exrepúblicas soviéticas—Georgia, Armenia y Azerbaiyán—y siete repúblicas de la Federación Rusa: Adigueya, Karacháyevo-Cherkesia, Kabardia-Balkaria, Osetia del Norte-Alania, Ingusetia, Chechenia, Daguestán, además de otros territorios en disputa, como Abjasia.

Tamaño empresa estuvo a cargo de Antonio Sagona, quien lamentablemente falleció un año antes de que la obra fuera publicada. Sagona fue un reconocido arqueólogo dedicado al Próximo Oriente, especializado en Turquía y el Cáucaso, que trabajó por más de tres décadas en la Universidad de Melbourne, Australia, y era uno de los editores de la prestigiosa revista británica *Ancient Near Eastern Studies*. Su personalidad destacaba por el buen manejo del ruso y de otras lenguas, como el georgiano, lo que le permitía tener acceso a información y bibliografía que otros desconocían. Su enfoque teórico era procesual, acorde con el predominante en la escuela anglosajona, aunque crítico de los modelos de evolución unilineal, como se verá en la reseña que presentamos a continuación.

El libro se compone de once capítulos de variada extensión, precedidos por un prefacio y una introducción, y seguidos por la bibliografía y un índice. Cada uno de los capítulos cuenta con una introducción y una conclusión sumamente claras donde el autor concentra las ideas centrales. En general, abundan las descripciones detalladas, acompañadas de varios mapas y decenas de figuras. Es de destacar que este libro presenta información nueva, sin publicar, y también datos que hasta el momento no habían circulado en lengua inglesa.

La obra comienza con una introducción de dieciocho páginas, donde el autor ofrece una breve historia de la investigación arqueológica en esta región, centrada en el período soviético, donde no sólo podemos conocer los comienzos y la institucionalización de esta disciplina, sino también un acercamiento a la práctica arqueológica al otro lado de la Cortina de Hierro. A partir de lo anterior, termina enumerando los problemas en el estudio del Cáucaso, pues a la multiplicidad de idiomas en las que se publican los informes, redactados en distintos sistemas de escritura, buena parte de estos son muy breves, incompletos y con imágenes defectuosas. Son justamente estas limitaciones las que el autor intenta zanjar con la redacción de la presente obra.

El primer capítulo del libro, “The Land and Its Languages” (pp. 19–33), tal como reza su título, presenta la geografía física, los recursos minerales, la vegetación, el clima, la geomorfología, y las lenguas del Cáucaso. Esto último lo vincula con estudios de ADN mitocondrial, cuyos resultados demuestran que, a pesar de la diversidad lingüística, las personas poseen estrechos vínculos genéticos, matizando así aquellas visiones que enfatizan el peso de las invasiones o de las migraciones en la conformación de las poblaciones del lugar.

En el segundo capítulo, “Trailblazers: The Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Foundations” (pp. 34–83), inicia la descripción e interpretación del proceso histórico-cultural, comenzando por las primeras evidencias de homínidos en el Cáucaso, las cuales resultan ser las más antiguas del mundo que se han hallado hasta el momento fuera de África. Se mencionan los datos más relevantes sobre el Paleolítico Inferior (1.800.000–150.000 a.C.), el Paleolítico Medio (150.000–35.000 a.C.), el Paleolítico Tardío (35.000–10.000 a.C.) y el Mesolítico (10.000–6500 a.C.), con un apartado dedicado a la suerte de los neandertales y otro sobre la función del arte parietal. Para ayudar a aquellos no habituados a leer sobre estas temáticas, el autor incorpora un cuadro donde repasa los cinco modos de la industria lítica, desde el Olduvayense hasta los microlitos.

Después de este recorrido fugaz a través de cientos de miles de años, el autor pasa a focalizarse en el sexto milenio, cuando surgen las primeras aldeas agrícolas en el Cáucaso. Este capítulo, denominado “Transitions to Settled Life: The Neolithic (6000–5000 BC)” (pp. 84–131), se concentra en una de las tres tradiciones neolíticas de la región, la cultura Shulaveri-Shomutepe, ubicada al centro y sur de la parte meridional del Cáucaso. Dicha tradición, que no parece haber estado precedida por una fase anterior local, inicia de forma tar-

día con relación a la neolitización de las demás regiones del Próximo Oriente, siendo contemporánea de la cultura Halaf al norte de la Mesopotamia. La misma presenta orientaciones locales, aunque en algunos sitios se verifica una fuerte ligazón con el sedentarismo, como se deduce de la gran acumulación de depósitos, la construcción reiterada de viviendas en el mismo lugar y la permanente reparación de paredes y de muros, aspecto que el autor vincula con el Neolítico de Anatolia. En un principio, las estructuras tienden a ser redondas y ovales con patios comunales, pero luego pasan a predominar diseños rectangulares más orientados a los núcleos familiares, a lo que se suma una mayor interacción con la cultura Halaf. Si bien queda descartada la vieja teoría que veía al Cáucaso como un foco originario de neolitización, el autor recuerda que aquí se hallan las evidencias más antiguas de viticultura, técnica que posteriormente se difundió a otras partes del Próximo Oriente.

El siguiente capítulo, el más extenso de todo el libro, se dedica al período Calcolítico. Su título es “Far-Flung Networks: The Chalcolithic (5000/4800–3500 BC)” (pp. 132–212) y se concentra principalmente en la cultura Maikop, tradición del norte del Cáucaso. El aspecto más destacado de esta última, sin dudas, son las tumbas dentro de grandes montículos de tierra, las cuales solían estar acompañadas de un rico ajuar donde sobresalen objetos de metal elaborados en oro, plata y distintas variantes de cobre. Los asentamientos, por su parte, presentan ocupaciones breves y una organización dispersa sin fortificaciones, lo que lleva a pensar que se trataba en gran parte de poblaciones móviles, como parece indicar la escasa cantidad de huesos de cerdo. Hacia el final del capítulo se analizan dos tradiciones del sur del Cáucaso: la cultura *Chaff-Faced Ware*—que comparte fuertes vínculos con el valle del Amuq, el valle del Éufrates y la Alta Mesopotamia—y la cultura Sioni, restringida a la parte centro-sur del Cáucaso. Según el autor, todas estas tradiciones se caracterizan por tratarse de comunidades que se asentaban de manera temporal en lugares donde podían acceder a diversos recursos, por establecer vínculos con regiones distantes, y por la emergencia de la desigualdad social, aunque, a nuestro modo de ver, esto último parece ser más evidente en la cultura Maikop que en sus pares meridionales.

El quinto capítulo, “Encounters beyond the Caucasus: The Kura-Araxes Culture and the Early Bronze Age (3500–2400 BC)” (pp. 213–280), se dedica a uno de los fenómenos más intrigantes en el paso del Calcolítico a la Edad del Bronce: la expansión de la cultura caucásica Kura-Araxes hacia Anatolia, el Levante e Irán. La misma se caracteriza por un repertorio cultural

bien definido, que en conjunto refleja la existencia de comunidades aldeanas de campesinos y de pastores, pero cuyo centro social eran las casas, las cuales muestran una notable estandarización en su diseño y materiales de construcción, siendo además el lugar donde se realizaban la mayor cantidad de prácticas rituales. Por su parte, al contrario de la cultura Uruk, con la que coexiste durante medio milenio, y de la precedente cultura Maikop, del norte del Cáucaso, el complejo Kura-Araxes muestra una fuerte horizontalidad, careciendo de obras monumentales y de tumbas con ricos ajuares, por lo que el autor sostiene que la toma de decisiones debió haber sido colectiva. Tanto su perduración en el tiempo como su distribución geográfica resultan en un alto grado de regionalismo, ampliamente detallado a lo largo del capítulo, lo que se interpreta como reflejo de múltiples etnias al interior de una misma *oikoumene*. El autor dedica varias páginas a explicar este fenómeno, para lo que considera una multiplicidad de factores, llegando a la conclusión de que se trataba de pequeños grupos parentales fuertemente cohesionados que reproducían sus formas de vida en regiones donde no solían predominar formas verticales y burocráticas de organización social, formando entonces así una suerte de “archipiélago”.

A continuación sigue un breve capítulo, “Dolmens for the Dead: The Western Caucasus in the Bronze Age (3250–1250 BC)” (pp. 281–297), que se dedica a analizar una pequeña región en el Cáucaso occidental que, de manera llamativa, no formó parte del fenómeno Kura-Araxes y que conservó su propia tradición cultural durante casi dos milenios. En este caso destacan las construcciones megalíticas funerarias y el bajo número de asentamientos. La singularidad de esta situación, sin antecedentes locales, ha llevado a los investigadores a suponer un origen foráneo, muy posiblemente europeo, donde también se constata una amplia presencia de dólmenes. Pero el autor, aunque no descarta una posible influencia, se inclina a suponer una transformación interna, donde los recolectores, a medida que fueron adoptando la agricultura, volcaron sus esfuerzos en construir grandes tumbas para materializar así su permanencia y su relación con la tierra.

Llegamos así al séptimo capítulo, “The Emergence of Elites and a New Social Order (2500–1500 BC)” (pp. 298–377). Como indica su título, aborda un milenio que, según la cronología local, ocupa toda la Edad del Bronce Medio. En los enfoques tradicionales, este período es conocido como complejo Trialeti, pero el autor prefiere dividirlo en tres fases: la primera, de 2600/2500 a 2000/1900 a.C., caracterizada por los horizontes Martkopi y Bedeni; la segunda, de 2000/1900 a 1700 a.C., para la que reserva el título de

complejo Trialeti; y la tercera, de 1700 a 1450 a.C., una fase poco clara de transición hacia el Bronce Tardío. En cada una de estas fases, las casas y los asentamientos, que habían sido los rasgos centrales de la cultura Kura-Araxes, pierden protagonismo a favor de las tumbas en forma de túmulos, cuya variedad de tamaño y de riqueza en sus ajuares son claros indicios de una mayor desigualdad y de una estructura social jerárquica. Entre los bienes que acompañan a los difuntos caben destacar finas cerámicas, objetos de oro y de plata, y la presencia de carros y de ruedas, a los que se dedica toda una sección dentro del capítulo, pues es aquí donde existe la mayor concentración de vehículos mejor conservados de Europa y del Próximo Oriente. A lo anterior hay que sumar la decoración de grandes copas con escenas de banquetes, de entregas de ofrendas y de enfrentamientos armados, lo que es correlativo con el incremento de hachas y de espadas. Según el autor, todos estos cambios son resultado de la emergencia de sociedades de rango, donde el poder y la autoridad, a diferencia de otras partes del Próximo Oriente, no se expresaba a través de grandes ciudades, de edificios públicos monumentales o de complejos sistemas burocráticos, sino por medio de los enterramientos y de los túmulos.

Los siguientes tres capítulos del libro se dedican a analizar el Bronce Tardío y la primera Edad del Hierro, períodos que en el Cáucaso muestran una notable continuidad, a diferencia de las demás regiones del Próximo Oriente. Como señala el autor, la ruptura más notable a nivel local se verifica en el paso del Bronce Medio al Tardío, lo que sin dudas obliga a revisar aquellos grandes relatos basados en la crisis del siglo XII como fecha parteaguas. El octavo capítulo, “From Fortresses to Fragmentation: The Southern Caucasus in the Late Bronze Age through the Iron Age I (1500–800 BC)” (pp. 378–422), se restringe al sur del Cáucaso, principalmente al horizonte Lchashen-Tsitelgori. El cambio más notable es la aparición de grandes fortalezas construidas en piedra y la multiplicación de aldeas con arquitectura planificada y murallas defensivas. Las tumbas en forma de túmulos decrecen de manera notable, pero en los ajuares siguen destacando las armas y los objetos de prestigio. En lo que respecta a la metalurgia, si bien comienza la producción del hierro, el uso del bronce no declina, sino que, al contrario, se refina aún más. Para distinguir estos períodos del anterior, el autor escoge el término “Edad de la Soberanía” que, si bien se nos antoja un tanto anacrónico, sirve para dar cuenta de la emergencia de entidades políticas más centralizadas que debieron contar con alguna forma de control tanto de las tierras de cultivo, como del acceso a los recursos naturales y a la fuerza de trabajo.

En el norte del Cáucaso, de forma contemporánea, se destacan dos tradiciones, la cultura de Koban y la cultura de Colchis. El autor dedica el noveno capítulo a la primera de éstas, “Smiths, Warriors, and Womenfolk: The Koban Culture of the Northern Caucasus (1400–600 BC)” (pp. 423–448). Aquí también comienza la arquitectura en piedra, sobresaliendo asentamientos planificados en tierras altas, como en el sitio de Pokunsyrt, en territorio ruso. Un rasgo dominante es la escala de la producción metalúrgica y sus avances técnicos, al punto que el bronce parece haberse convertido en una verdadera *commodity*, aseveración que nos parece un tanto precipitada y falta de argumento. La idea central de este capítulo es que habría prevalecido una forma horizontal e igualitaria de organización social, aunque luego la evidencia descripta parece matizar bastante dicha aseveración, como muestra el uso de bienes de metal compartidos entre las elites de esta cultura y la de Colchis, y la existencia de tres tipos de vestimenta distintas entre las mujeres—como se deduce de los enterramientos—que el propio autor asocia con diferencias de estatus.

El siguiente capítulo, “A World Apart: The Colchian Culture” (pp. 449–474), es el primero donde se mencionan documentos escritos que nos permiten ampliar la interpretación del registro arqueológico, fundamentalmente fuentes griegas, como Hipócrates y Jenofonte. Si bien esta tradición comparte, como dijimos, los mismos objetos de metal que la cultura de Koban, sus prácticas funerarias difieren, al igual que la disposición de sus asentamientos y el resto de su cultura material. Para dar cuenta de los vínculos entre ambas, el autor apela a la figura del yin y yang, pero tampoco profundiza en esta llamativa elección. La parte más interesante del capítulo es aquella dedicada a explicar la costumbre de enterrar objetos valiosos, a modo de tesoros, que el autor compara con otras culturas, llegando a la conclusión de que, en el caso de Colchis, pudiera responder a motivos rituales, donde los líderes demostraban su poder mediante la destrucción de riquezas.

El libro finaliza cuando apenas inicia la colonización griega, la llegada de los escitas y la expansión del reino de Urartu, en torno a los siglos VII/VI a.C. A modo de conclusión, el autor cierra con un breve capítulo de tan solo tres páginas, titulado “The Grand Challenges for the Archaeology of the Caucasus” (pp. 475–477). En el mismo, incluye una lista con seis desafíos a futuro, dentro de los cuales nos gustaría destacar aquellos que apuntan a superar el peso de los nacionalismos y localismos actuales, que resultan en una plétora de términos y de cronologías que limitan la posibilidad de comprender los procesos globales que involucran a todo el Cáucaso y las regiones

adyacentes. De ello resulta la referencia imprecisa de culturas, de tradiciones, de horizontes o de complejos, al que el propio autor está obligado a recurrir.

En resumen, se trata de una obra de lectura obligatoria para todos aquellos interesados en el Cáucaso, desde la Prehistoria hasta mediados del primer milenio a.C. Asimismo, puede que sea útil para quienes se dedican al Próximo Oriente o a Europa desde el Neolítico hasta comienzos de la Edad del Hierro, pues de esta manera conocerán mejor una región donde ambos mundos interactuaban y que además fue escenario de fenómenos singulares que actuaron sobre sus pares europeos y asiáticos. En el caso de aquellos procesos locales, creemos que ofrece elementos suficientes para comparar desarrollos alternativos a partir de condiciones de partida semejantes. Si bien no estamos de acuerdo con todas las interpretaciones que propone el autor y algunas metáforas no nos parecen del todo acertadas, el hecho de que el grueso del texto consista en descripciones bien detalladas de la evidencia lo vuelve, de aquí en más, en un punto de partida sólido para nuevas investigaciones.

PABLO JARUF

*Universidad de Buenos Aires
Universidad Nacional de Luján
IMHICIHU-CONICET*

Instituto Superior del Profesorado “Dr. Joaquín V. González”

ISAAC KALIMI, *Writing and Rewriting the Story of Solomon in Ancient Israel*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018. 402 pp. ISBN-13: 978-3447113632 (Hardback). USD 125.00.

Isaac Kalimi es conocido por sus estudios sobre el período del Segundo Templo, por sus trabajos sobre el libro de Crónicas, y especialmente por su obra *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* del año 2000, la cual ostenta un lugar necesario en toda investigación sobre la historiografía bíblica.

En su nueva obra, *Writing and Rewriting the Story of Solomon in Ancient Israel*, Kalimi se ha propuesto una tarea que asombra no haya sido estudiada antes: recorrer los textos relativos a la historia del rey Salomón presentes en la Biblia y compararlos entre sí. Es así como este libro no tiene como primer objetivo describir la historia del rey sabio ni buscar reconstruir

el “Salomón histórico” y su época, sino que está dedicado a estudiar los textos sobre Salomón que nos ofrece la historiografía bíblica más antigua (libros de Samuel y Reyes) con la cual nos encontramos en el relato también historiográfico posterior del libro de Crónicas. Es sabido que ambas narraciones tienen tanto diferencias sustanciales como elementos en común, y que en general a la segunda se la ha considerado de poco valor histórico. Su mayor lejanía con los hechos y su marcado interés teológico han contribuido a que esa opinión se consolidara. Como resultado, dicha narración ha sido relegada o incluso ignorada en los estudios que buscan describir el Salomón histórico y su época. Pero si bien es cierto que la confiabilidad histórica es menor en la narración de Crónicas, también es cierto que el interés por la historia fáctica no es el único objetivo de estos relatos. Por lo tanto, una cuidadosa comparación puede revelar aspectos interesantes y a veces velados de la comprensión de la figura de Salomón y su papel en la historia de Israel.

El libro consta de dos partes. La primera, que va del capítulo 1 al 4, está dedicada a presentar el estado de la cuestión, el uso de las fuentes y a indagar acerca de qué es lo que puede afirmarse con cierta certidumbre sobre la figura y el contexto histórico de Salomón. Sin embargo, el autor va más allá y aprovecha esta introducción para discutir las principales posturas abordadas por otros autores contemporáneos. Kalimi hace un fuerte alegato en contra de las lecturas minimalistas (a las que llama “revisionistas”) que han surgido en los últimos años y que en general niegan la historicidad de la figura de Salomón. Así, repasa las aproximaciones de quienes consideran que Salomón no existió (N. Lemche y otros) y postulan que toda la narración es una ficción ideológica y la figura del famoso rey habría sido creada en el período persa para fundar un pasado de esplendor y gloria, hasta quienes sostienen la existencia de Salomón pero señalan que lo dicho sobre él no puede ser verdad (I. Finkelstein y otros).

De acuerdo con estas posturas, este rey no habría construido el templo, no habría tenido demasiado poder ni habría gobernado sobre un dilatado territorio. Expone Kalimi los trabajos de estos autores y muestra cómo a su criterio tienen capacidad para dudar de los textos pero no para evaluar con seriedad su contenido y sus posibilidades. A criterio suyo, se abusa del argumento por “el silencio”, es decir, al no haber evidencia arqueológica se asume que nada puede decirse sobre un tema en particular. Pero el autor cuestiona esta postura por inconsistente, al señalar que el silencio no puede ser criterio para afirmar algo, en especial si se tiene en cuenta las limitaciones de la arqueología para

hacer afirmaciones nítidas sobre hechos puntuales del pasado. Señala, con buen criterio, que muchos de los datos o la ausencia de ellos que los minimalistas presentan sobre el tiempo de Salomón, son tomados de fuentes ambiguas y de difícil comprobación. Asimismo, este también cuestiona que en algunos casos los autores que pertenecen a la corriente minimalista no ofrezcan la fuente de la información que señalan. También indica que esta corriente desestima los testimonios textuales sin hacer un análisis de sus eventuales fortalezas, y por ello se omite compararlos con otras fuentes literarias de Cercano Oriente antiguo. Kalimi señala que la coincidencia de las descripciones bíblicas con la de otras historiografías extrabíblicas del Cercano Oriente antiguo contribuye a dar confiabilidad al texto. De allí que nuestro autor postule la necesidad de tener en cuenta los relatos al momento de producir una afirmación sobre la historicidad de las narraciones bíblicas. Pero esta consideración de los textos bíblicos no debe hacerse de manera liviana; así señala en la p. 9:

Una sistemática investigación sobre las narrativas de Samuel-Reyes y Crónicas, solo puede ser llevada a cabo sobre la base de un detallado análisis de cada texto en sí mismo y de su comparación entre sí. Tal comparación pondrá en evidencia lo distintivo de cada texto revelando dos retratos irreconocibles e incompatibles (o si se lo prefiere, dos “máscaras”) del rey Salomón, en particular respecto a su nacimiento, surgimiento, y su construcción del templo. Cada una presenta la imagen del rey Salomón que su autor deseó presentar a los lectores de su tiempo¹.

Kalimi, como ya señalamos, no se propone reconstruir la historia sino mostrar lo que los textos dicen sobre Salomón, y para ello hecha mano de un enorme caudal analítico que exigirá de quien lo lea, y no concuerde con su lectura, de un esfuerzo significativo para contradecirlo. En otras palabras, los autores que pertenecen a la corriente minimalista podrán rechazar los argumentos de Kalimi, pero tendrán que fundar su posición con información más precisa que la que han utilizado hasta hoy. Porque, aunque el trabajo que leemos no tiene la intención primaria de mostrar la historicidad de los hechos considerados, al comparar las distintas narrativas se observa una muy alta posibilidad de que en efecto respondan a hechos reales y que en verdad hayan

¹ La traducción es propia.

sucedido. De más está decir que Kalimi reconoce que en los textos hay exageraciones y elogios desmesurados que deben considerarse propios de toda narrativa apologética sobre un monarca y que deben dejarse de lado.

La segunda parte, que comprende del capítulo 5 al 14, es el corazón de este trabajo. Estos están dedicados al análisis de las dos narrativas en forma paralela. Cada capítulo es una obra de erudición y sus títulos reflejan lo detallado de este estudio. El capítulo 5 se dedica a la historia del nacimiento de Salomón según 2 Samuel 10-12. Se desgana en el estudio de su unidad literaria, de su composición estilística y teológica, del juego sutil de los nombres dados al nacer, y otros detalles. El capítulo 6 estudia el carácter de haber sido el “rey más amado” por Dios; para ello analiza 2 Sam 12,25 donde el profeta Natán pone al recién nacido Salomón el nombre de Yedidías, que significa “amado de Yahweh”. Este nombre no será el que lleve a lo largo de su vida, pero indica una marca en su nacimiento que lo vincula con haber sido elegido y amado de manera especial por Dios. En este capítulo se presenta y compara la narrativa sobre Salomón con la de otros reyes de aquel entonces; se estudia y comentan las historias de Sargón de Akkad y de Sargón II de Assur, la del rey hitita Hattushili III de Hatti, la de la faraón Hatshepsut de Egipto, y la del rey persa Jerjes I. Señala que todos estos ejemplos se refieren a monarcas que no poseían el linaje que los consagraba como reyes, y al usurpar el trono gestaron una historia o leyenda donde la divinidad confirmaba su derecho a ocupar ese lugar. Vemos que del mismo modo sucede con la historia del nacimiento de Salomón que posee dos nombres, donde es el segundo el que confirma la voluntad de Dios de que él sea el rey de Israel en lugar de su hermano Adonías, el legítimo heredero. Este segundo nombre se torna entonces significativo para el contexto inmediato a su nacimiento, pero también para la más extensa narrativa de su llegada al poder como rey, en la que reemplaza al heredero por sucesión natural de la corona.

El capítulo siguiente (7) Kalimi continúa el análisis de la narrativa de su nacimiento en los textos del Segundo Templo; así presenta y estudia la narrativa en Crónicas y en Ben Sira y otros textos. Se detiene en el análisis de un eventual tercer nombre dado a Salomón (luego de Salomón y Yedidías). Y así considera que Qohelet pudo ser también un nombre por el cual era conocido Salomón ya que con él se tituló el libro que en la tradición posterior y actual es llamado Eclesiastés. Señala que es en algunas fuentes talmúdicas donde se consolida este nombre, pero es descartado por nuestro autor en particular porque la atribución a Salomón de ese nombre es hipotética y no es

atestiguado en ningún otro texto bíblico. Del mismo modo, el autor considera las menciones de Salomón en el apócrifo Sabiduría de Salomón y en Nehemías. Luego de descartar la mención hecha en el Cantar de los Cantares sobre la base de que es un texto poético y sin pretensión histórica, concluye el capítulo con la observación de que en el Segundo Templo hubo dos corrientes de interpretación respecto a la figura de Salomón. Una representada por Crónicas y Qohelet, en la cual se exalta la figura de un Salomón sin manchas, y en la que no se mencionan hechos que podrían disminuir la grandeza del rey. La otra corriente, donde priman Nehemías y Ben Sira, si bien destaca la importancia de Salomón y su valor como rey sabio y poderoso, no desconoce sus desaciertos y los señalan: tal es así que lo llaman Yedidías, “el amado de Dios”, pero a la vez muestra su condición de pecador.

Si bien no tenemos espacio para comentar cada uno de los capítulos que siguen, las observaciones realizadas hasta aquí tienen el propósito de brindar una aproximación general a la metodología y trabajo que proporciona el autor. La obra es densa y rica en estudios, detalles, comparaciones, críticas y valoraciones de otros autores. Con esto último lleva al lector a la necesidad de tomar partido, pero a partir de una muy sólida presentación de su propia posición. La lectura de un libro como este eleva al lector porque lo obliga a estudiar, a repasar textos y a volver a considerar, sea cual fuere su posición previa sobre la historicidad de Salomón, la necesidad de reescribir la historia de este sabio y rey de Israel.

PABLO R. ANDIÑACH

Universidad Católica Argentina

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(C1107AFD) Ciudad de Buenos Aires
Argentina

Dirección Electrónica/E-mail address

rominadellacasa@gmail.com

