



HISTORY, POLITICS AND THE BIBLE FROM THE IRON AGE TO THE MEDIA AGE

EDITED BY
JAMES G. CROSSLEY
AND JIM WEST

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FROM THE IRON AGE TO THE MEDIA AGE

Essays in Honour of Keith W. Whitelam

Edited by
Jim West and James Crossley

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ABBREVIATIONS

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
ADPV	Archiv für die Deutsch-Palestina Verein
ANET	J. B. Pritchard, ed., <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , 3rd ed. Princeton. 1969
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BZAR	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CIS	Copenhagen International Seminar
COS	<i>The Context of Scripture</i> . Edited by W. W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden, 1997–2002
CSSH	<i>Comparative Studies in Science and History</i>
DBAT	<i>Dielhammer Blätter zum Alten Testament</i>
ESHM	European Seminar in Historical Methodology
ET	English translation
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KTU	<i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i> . Edited by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. AOAT 24/1. Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976. 2d enlarged ed. of <i>KTU: The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places</i> . Edited by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. Münster, 1995 (= <i>CTU</i>)
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NAEHL	<i>The New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i>
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
RBL	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SWBA	Social World of Biblical Antiquity

<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green. 8 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974–
<i>THAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> . Edited by E. Jenni, with assistance from C. Westermann. 2 vols., Stuttgart, 1971–1976
<i>TLOT</i>	Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament. Edited by E. Jenni, with assistance from C. Westermann. Translated by M. E. Biddle. 3 vols. Peabody, MA, 1997
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>VTSup</i>	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

INTRODUCTION:
KEITH WHITELAM IN CONTEXT

James Crossley
(St Mary's University)

and

Jim West
(Ming Hua Theological College)

We are in the peculiar position of not being entirely clear that Keith Whitelam would be overly fond of a *Festschrift*. Whitelam's modesty no doubt fuels our hesitations. He is also known for having strong attachments to what the British politician Dennis Healey once said all politicians (and thus biblical scholars) should have: a hinterland. Whitelam has especial interests in athletics (he is a trainer at a high level) and the fortunes of Manchester United (something which he shares with at least one of the co-editors). More recently, he has turned his hand to baking, plumbing and gardening. But one of Whitelam's great achievements is to show how all these honourable hobbies and interests are, without contradiction, the hinterland of one of the most radical biblical scholars of recent times.

Having spent both his undergraduate and postgraduate years at the University of Manchester (where he was taught by, among others, F. F. Bruce), Whitelam would soon go on to publish his first monograph – the published version of his 1978 PhD thesis – in an area that might be considered a relatively mainstream work of historical criticism: *The Just King: Monarchical Judicial Authority in Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1979).¹ It was around this time that he also gained a permanent academic position at the University of Stirling in Scotland where he would remain until his appointment in 2001 as Head of the now defunct Department of Biblical Studies at the University of Sheffield (more on which below). His early career was pioneering on two fronts. First, he would be one of

1. The original thesis was completed under the title, 'Judicial Functions of the King in Ancient Israel' (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 1978).

the few British scholars to attend the annual Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) conference in North America, a now common occurrence among British and European scholars. Not only did Whitlam and others play a significant role among a new generation of historians in bringing new questions to Hebrew Bible/Old Testament studies, but their influence (conscious or unconscious) could be seen in the developing social-scientific approaches to New Testament studies, such as in the work of Richard Horsley. Second, as part of his attendance at the annual SBL conference, he would, along with his close friend Robert Coote, develop interdisciplinary approaches to questions relating to the history of ‘ancient Israel’ and the land of Palestine which were firmly in the annalist tradition of the French historian, Fernand Braudel, and with a particular stress on the *longue durée* and recurring social patterns. Whitlam and Coote would co-author one of the major works in this scholarly sub-genre: *The Emergence of Early Israel in Historical Perspective* (Sheffield: Almond, 1987; republished by Sheffield Phoenix, 2010). The emphasis on extrabiblical archaeology and the problematizing of the biblical texts for earlier reconstructions of ‘ancient Israel’ would be an early indication of Whitlam’s reputation as a ‘minimalist’ historian.

In the 1990s Whitlam would, however, turn his attention to the social and ideological history of biblical scholarship on the construction of ancient Israel, particularly in his most famous, most controversial, and arguably most important publication: *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (London: Routledge, 1996). Along with Philip Davies, Thomas Thompson, Niels Peter Lemche, and (depending on who does the counting) John van Seters, Whitlam became known as one of the notorious group of ‘minimalist’ scholars. ‘Minimalism’ was popularly understood in scholarly circles as the attempt to allow the history of Israel to be investigated without simply falling back on a re-telling of the biblical text.² However, Whitlam’s major work of the 1990s was noticeably different from his fellow ‘minimalists’ in that his focus was on the ideological location and social history of scholarship, particularly the ways in which historical scholarship on ancient Israel has consciously or unconsciously imposed modern nationalist notions about the state of Israel. The dark side of this imposition was the removal

2. For Whitlam’s own account of ‘minimalism’ (and problematizing of the label itself) see Keith W. Whitlam, ‘Representing Minimalism: The Rhetoric and Reality of Revisionism’, in *Sense and Sensitivity: Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll*, ed. A. G. Hunter and P. R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 194–223.

of alternative histories from the record, histories which likewise had contemporary relevance; in other words, this involved the silencing of Palestinian history. This publication led to some disgraceful allegations levelled at Whitelam, including allegations made by scholars who had (predictably) not even bothered to read the book!³ But, once again, Whitelam's work was ahead of its time. Not only was Whitelam one of the very few biblical scholars then taking seriously the now standard work of Edward Said, but he was anticipating developments in ideological criticism of biblical scholarship, which has begun to grow over the past decade. In this respect, one of the co-editors previously acknowledged his debt to *The Invention of Ancient Israel* at a time when the social history of biblical scholarship was only just starting to gain momentum.⁴

Whitelam would continue his interests in ideological criticism of scholarship in his analysis of the fallout from *The Invention of Ancient Israel* and beyond but in the new millennium he was also taking his interests in the construction of the state of Israel in new directions. As 'reception history' gained momentum as a sub-discipline within biblical studies, Whitelam made another innovative move, this time in the role of imagined cartographies,⁵ even making connections at one annual SBL meeting between maps of his home county of Lincolnshire and mapping the land of Palestine. But one question that had followed him throughout most of his career continued to haunt him: how to write a history of the land of Palestine without anachronistic reference to 'borders', 'states' and biblical kings? His answer to such questions can now be found in Keith W. Whitelam, *Rhythms of Time: Reconnecting Palestine's Past* (BenBlackBooks, 2013).⁶ Echoing Braudel even in the cover design, Whitelam looked at changes and 'rhythms' in settlement patterns, climate, economics, and so on, to provide a kind of geographical history which looked at how human beings interacted with their environment, rather

3. Whitelam, 'Representing Minimalism', 212–15, 219.

4. James G. Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror: Scholarly Projects for a New American Century* (London: Equinox, 2008), 3.

5. See e.g. Keith W. Whitelam, 'Lines of Power: Mapping Ancient Israel', in *To Break Every Yoke: Essays in Honor of Marvin L. Chaney*, ed. Robert B. Coote and Norman K. Gottwald (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 40–79; Keith W. Whitelam, 'The Land and the Book: Biblical Studies and Imaginative Geographies of Palestine', *Postscripts* 4 (2008), 71–84; Keith W. Whitelam, ed., *Holy Land as Homeland? Models for Constructing the Historic Landscapes of Jesus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011).

6. Further details are available at <http://www.rhythmsoftime.com/>.

than a narrow focus on the search for an emerging ethnicity or ‘great men’ like King David. He also connected ancient history with contemporary politics and how different retellings of history matter for contemporary political discourses concerning Israel and Palestine, and with some consideration given to American foreign policy debates. Aside from the content, Whitelam made another innovative move with this publication: he self-published it as an eBook. We will have to wait to see how influential this move towards affordable, low-cost publishing will be, but it is striking that Whitelam has done so at a time when open-access journals (e.g. *Relegere, Bible and Critical Theory*) and monograph series (e.g. SBL’s *Ancient Near East Monographs/Monografías sobre el Antiguo Cercano Oriente*) are beginning to make their mark in biblical studies.

It is perhaps less well known that Whitelam has a reputation as a first class Head of Department and mentor to younger scholars. It is not uncommon to find now senior academics in the fields of biblical studies and religious studies in various British universities who openly speak of their debt to, and admiration for, Whitelam. Whitelam also had the dubious pleasure of being a head of department throughout the 1990s and 2000s. This enduring punishment is testimony to just how good he was at his job. When he stepped down as Head of Biblical Studies at Sheffield in 2006, he left the Department with eight full-time members of staff without running a deficit, as well as continuing his role as co-director (with Cheryl Exum and David Clines) of Sheffield Phoenix Press (2004–2014). Within three years of stepping down, and a new managerial regime in place, there was a near-successful attempt to close the Department and Whitelam was one of a number of staff who, with much international support, fought hard to keep the Department alive. Sadly, this effort was in vain because another new managerial regime was later successful in shutting down the Department, which by this point had been allowed to wither away. The contrast with the thriving Department Whitelam left is striking.

One of the misguided criticisms sometimes levelled at Whitelam was that he is a product of the social changes of the 1960s, as if the pure scholar of his generation were somehow immune from being tainted by history. Instead of seeing this as a criticism, we should look at Whitelam’s context as a way of understanding Whitelam and his range of scholarly interests, many of which we hope are reflected in this volume. His interdisciplinary approach to history can be located as part of wider trends after the so-called ‘explosion of knowledge’ in the 1960s, including the impact in European and American universities of decolonization, perceptions of secularization, the rising influence of sociology, the emergence of anthropological approaches to history, translations of Weber into English,

and, perhaps more indirectly, shifts in West German historiography away from the Nazi cult of the individual towards trends and themes.⁷ His interest in reception and readers is part of the general (though not always acknowledged) impact of poststructuralism on the field of biblical studies. Whitelam's interest in reception of politically engaged scholarship can also be tied in with the aftermath of 1968. But the prior year – 1967 – is equally important as the Six-Day War marked the turning point in Anglo-American attitudes towards Israel which had a profound impact on higher education. Whitelam was one of only a handful of scholars prepared to be critical of Israeli policies towards Palestinians in a climate where criticisms of the state of Israel were too quickly and conveniently equated with antisemitism. Few scholars would be courageous enough to act as Whitelam has done and, despite all the disgraceful attacks, he always acted with integrity and honesty. Whether he likes it or not, it is fitting that Whitelam's remarkable career is recognized for its central importance to the field of biblical studies.

7. On the rise of historical engagement with social sciences in biblical studies (especially New Testament studies) see James G. Crossley, *Why Christianity Happened: A Sociohistorical Account of Christian Origins 26–50CE* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 3–22.

MAXIMALIST AND/OR MINIMALIST APPROACHES
IN RECENT REPRESENTATIONS
OF ANCIENT ISRAELITE AND JUDAEAN HISTORY

Ingrid Hjelm

(University of Copenhagen)

It is my great honour to contribute to a Festschrift for the author who opened our eyes to what we are doing and whom we serve in our pursuit of a 'truthful' history of Israel's past. The name of the topic alone causes problems as Keith Whitelam effectively demonstrated in his 1996 book, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*. There is a distortion here, which has not yet been overcome. Not only has scholarly focus on *Ancient Israel* silenced *Palestinian history*, but it has served agendas promoting the formation of a modern Israel, and scholars have (unwittingly) contributed to that development. Imperialistic use of scholarly works is rarely considered and discussed at length in academia. Edward Said's *Orientalism* from 1978 and his *Culture and Imperialism* from 1993, which, I believe, inspired Whitelam to write his 1996 book, received great attention. So did Whitelam's book, but, rather than discussing its epistemological implications, quite a few scholars rejected the idea that their work could have served political interests. The disproportionate attention given to 'biblical' and 'Israelite' history, which in most cases is told from a 'Judean' perspective, over against other peoples in Palestine, is still prevalent. It is, however, not only 'Palestinian', or perhaps more correct 'non-Jewish', history which is silenced, but histories also of the Bible's own peoples, and here most notably those of the descendants of the ancient kingdom of Israel. It is somewhat ironic that a majority of titles contain the name 'Israel' or 'Biblical Israel' when, in most cases, the historical Israel is discussed only in its relation to biblical Judah. A review of some recent discussions and representations of histories on 'Ancient Israel' demonstrates that nothing has really changed. Bias is still discussed in the context of the reliability of biblical sources rather than in the context of political agendas and unwarranted exploitation of scholarly works.

This is also the case with Megan Bishop Moore's *Philosophy and Practice in Writing a History of Ancient Israel*, from 2006.¹ The history Moore has in mind is the biblical history and its correction and confirmation by extra-biblical sources. The histories analyzed by Moore have been written by biblical scholars and theologians, who, in different ways, have approached tensions between history and biblical tradition in their inventions of Israel's past whether seen as mythical or real. As representative of minimalist voices, she singles out Thomas Thompson, Philip Davies, Niels Peter Lemche and Keith Whitelam, who appear to be her only true minimalists. Although their opinions have had several adherents, Moore does not count them as minimalists, because they either disagree with minimalism on certain points, have written comprehensive histories of ancient Israel, make biblical Israel the subject of their research or use the Bible for their reconstructions. Moore is well aware of Whitelam's agenda in his 1996 book, which she characterizes as: 'The most comprehensive castigation of religious and political motives in biblical scholarship'.² Her discussion of objectivity, however, quickly moves to a discussion of the reliability of the biblical texts without engaging in the potential dangers of biblical scholarship's promotion of unbalanced histories of the past.

In a rigid understanding of minimalism as minimising or even dismissing the role of the Bible and biblical Israel as a subject for historical reconstruction combined with a Persian-Hellenistic dating of biblical texts,³ Moore's definition of minimalism is set in contrast to maximalist positions promoted by Alt, Albright and their followers, who established the Bible as a primary witness to Israel's past. Her point of departure, however, is not a reaction to Alt and Albright in the '60s and '70s, spurred by e.g. archaeology, literary readings of the Bible, deconstruction and social science, but discussions that took place in the '90s. This leaves out the entire academic mentality of the '60s and '70s, which fostered quite a number of works that were critical of the conservative historicism that dominated the field. Works by Bernd J. Diebner, Heike Friis, David Gunn, Morton Smith, J. P. Fokkelman, Hans Heinrich Schmid, Rolf Rendtorff, H. Vorländer, Manfred Weippert, James Barr (Semantics) and Northrop Frye, which are not mentioned by Moore, opened up new avenues for interpreting Israel's

1. Megan Bishop Moore, *Philosophy and Practice in Writing a History of Ancient Israel*, LHBOTS 435 (London: T&T Clark International, 2006); Ingrid Hjelm, Review of *Philosophy and Practice in Writing a History of Ancient Israel*, by Megan Bishop Moore, *SJOT* 22 (2008): 150–54, and *CBQ* (2008): 579–80 (abbreviated version).

2. Moore, *Philosophy and Practice*, 81.

3. Moore, *Philosophy and Practice*, 108.

past as reflected in the Bible and were as much an inspiration to the minimalists as were those that dealt more explicitly with Israelite archaeology and history in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. Consequent of her narrow and misleading definition of minimalism, Moore concludes that true minimalism did not occur before the '90s, since Thompson (1974⁴) and Lemche (1985⁵) had until then written comprehensive historical works that addressed the issue of biblical Israel without neglecting completely the use of the Bible for their reconstructions.⁶ Later works by Thompson and Lemche are characterized as theoretical and methodological prolegomena to history.⁷ Both Davies and Whitelam have contributed prolegomena to history rather than full treatments of the past.⁸ Coote and Whitelam's⁹ 'major historical contribution'¹⁰ is thus dismissed and not considered comprehensive.¹¹ It is not quite clear whether this evaluation is based on the fact that Coote and Whitelam's work 1987 'ignores the Bible entirely and makes historical reconstructions based on archaeological evidence and social-scientific models',¹² or whether a work is only comprehensive when using the Bible as a source. From this it follows that one might characterize Coote and Whitelam's *The Emergence of Early Israel* as the earliest and only minimalist history of ancient Israel in spite of its title. Upon closer

4. Thomas L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham*, BZAW 133 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974); Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources*, SHANE 8 (Leiden Brill, 1992).

5. Niels Peter Lemche, *Early Israel: Anthropological and Historical Studies on the Israelite Society Before the Monarchy* (Leiden: Brill, 1985).

6. Moore, *Philosophy and Practice*, 141.

7. Thomas L. Thompson, *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999) = idem, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Niels Peter Lemche, *Prelude to Israel's Past: Background and Beginnings of Israelite History and Identity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), translated from its German original, *Die Vorgeschichte Israels: Von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 13. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, Biblische Enzyklopädie 1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1996); Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998).

8. Philip R. Davies, *In Search of Ancient Israel*, JSOTSup 148 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992).

9. Robert B. Coote and Keith W. Whitelam, *The Emergence of Early Israel in Historical Perspective* (Sheffield: Almond, 1987).

10. Moore, *Philosophy and Practice*, 142.

11. Moore, *Philosophy and Practice*, 177.

12. Moore, *Philosophy and Practice*, 142.