

The Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel

Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft



Herausgegeben von
John Barton, Reinhard G. Kratz, Nathan MacDonald,
Carol A. Newsom and Markus Witte

Band 511

The Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel

Edited by

Shuichi Hasegawa, Christoph Levin and Karen Radner

DE GRUYTER

ISBN 978-3-11-056416-7
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-056660-4
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-056418-1
ISSN 0934-2575

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Hasegawa, Shuichi, 1971- editor. | Levin, Christoph, 1950- editor. | Radner, Karen, editor.

Title: The last days of the Kingdom of Israel / edited by Shuichi Hasegawa, Christoph Levin, Karen Radner.

Description: First edition. | Berlin; Boston : Walter de Gruyter, [2018] |

Series: Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, ISSN 0934-2575 ; Band 511

Identifiers: LCCN 2018023384 | ISBN 9783110564167

Subjects: LCSH: Jews--History--953-586 B.C. | Assyria--History. | Bible. Old Testament--Criticism, interpretation, etc. | Assyro-Babylonian literature--History and criticism.

Classification: LCC DS121.6 .L37 2018 | DDC 933/.03--dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018023384>

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2019 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston
Druck und Bindung: CPI books GmbH, Leck

www.degruyter.com

Table of Contents

Shuichi Hasegawa

The Last Days of the Northern Kingdom of Israel

Introducing the Proceedings of a Multi-Disciplinary Conference — 1

Part I: Setting the Scene

Bob Becking

How to Encounter an Historical Problem?

“722–720 BCE” as a Case Study — 17

Part II: Approaching the Fall of Samaria from Contemporary Assyrian and Egyptian Sources

Jamie Novotny

Contextualizing the Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel: What Can Assyrian Official Inscriptions Tell Us? — 35

Eckart Frahm

Samaria, Hamath, and Assyria’s Conquests in the Levant in the Late 720s BCE

The Testimony of Sargon II’s Inscriptions — 55

Frederick Mario Fales

Why Israel?

Reflections on Shalmaneser V’s and Sargon II’s Grand Strategy for the Levant — 87

Karen Radner

The “Lost Tribes of Israel” in the Context of the Resettlement Programme of the Assyrian Empire — 101

Robert G. Morkot

The End of the Kingdom of Israel: A View from the Nile Valley — 125

Part III: Views from Archaeology

Ron E. Tappy

The Annals of Sargon II and the Archaeology of Samaria: Rhetorical Claims, Empirical Evidence — 147

Norma Franklin

Megiddo and Jezreel Reflected in the Dying Embers of the Northern Kingdom of Israel — 189

Part IV: Working with the Book of Kings: the Text

Timo Tekoniemi

Between Two Differing Editions: Some Notable Text-Critical Variants in 2 Kings 17 — 211

Dan'el Kahn

The Fall of Samaria: an Analysis of the Biblical Sources — 229

Christoph Levin

In Search of the Original Biblical Record of the Assyrian Conquest of Samaria — 251

Part V: Working with the Book of Kings: the Chronological Framework

Kristin Weingart

2 Kings 15–18: a Chronological Conundrum? — 267

Steven L. McKenzie

The Last Days of Israel: Chronological Considerations — 289

Part VI: Working with the Book of Kings: the Narrative

Christian Frevel

Wicked Usurpers and the Doom of Samaria

Further Views on the Angle of 2 Kings 15–17 — 303

Michael Pietsch

Hoshea ben Elah, the Last King of Israel: Narrative and History in 2 Kings 17:1–6 — 335

Georg Hentschel

Did Hoshea of Israel Continue the Foreign Policy of His Predecessors? — 355

Part VII: Reflections in the Prophets

Martti Nissinen

**The Book of Hosea and the Last Days of the Northern Kingdom
The Methodological Problem — 369**

H. G. M. Williamson

Isaiah and the Fall of the Kingdom of Israel — 383

Indices

1 General index — 401

2 Words — 411

3 Texts — 413

Shuichi Hasegawa

The Last Days of the Northern Kingdom of Israel

Introducing the Proceedings of a Multi-Disciplinary Conference

1 The Conference

The Northern Kingdom of Israel ruled the northern part of the Southern Levant for about 200 years from the mid-tenth century to the late eighth century BCE. The kingdom was conquered by the Assyrian Empire after the latter had persistently conducted military campaigns into the Levant from the mid-ninth century BCE onwards.

Despite considerable scholarly efforts over many years, the events of the last three decades of the Northern Kingdom of Israel are still hidden beneath the veil of history. A number of questions remain unresolved: the status of the kingdom after Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria, annexed its larger part in 732 BCE; the date of the conquest and the identity of the conqueror of Samaria, the capital of the kingdom; the fate of Hoshea, the Northern Kingdom's last king; or the circumstances under which Samaria joined the anti-Assyrian coalition after its fall. One of the primary reasons for this situation lies in the discrepancies to be found in the available textual sources, namely the Hebrew Bible (chiefly, Book of Kings, Isaiah and Hosea) and the Assyrian material, most importantly royal inscriptions and letters from the state correspondence. The gaps in the sources are not easy to bridge, also because Bible Studies and Assyriology are separate disciplines with distinct agendas and methodologies.

In the period in question, the Northern Kingdom played a significant role within and beyond the Levant. Elucidating its fall is not only critical for reconstructing the history of the kingdom itself, but can also contribute greatly to our understanding of biblical and ancient Near Eastern historiography, for it is extremely rare that the textual sources both of the conqueror and of the conquered are at our disposal. In addition, the modern state of Israel is the most exhaustively and most intensively excavated region in the Middle East, and this provides us with much relevant archaeological information. To investigate the period in question is also meaningful in order to reconstruct Assyria's diplomatic and military strategies toward its client kingdoms and its policies in its administrative provinces. Our topic serves to elucidate the structure of imperial domination

of this first empire of the ancient Near East, and to determine the difference in its treatment between the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, which persisted as an Assyrian client state and was never integrated into the Assyrian provincial system.

To be in any position to attempt to reconstruct “what really happened” in the last days of the Northern Kingdom, one must first analyse all these sources critically and independently, and only then move on to synthesizing the results. Only in this way, do we stand a chance to elucidate the background, the course, and the results of the Syro-Ephraimite War, and to determine the date of the fall of Samaria, the identity of its conqueror and the aftermath of the conquest. The critical analysis of the available sources was therefore the remit of the conference “The Last Days of the Northern Kingdom of Israel,” whose proceedings constitute the present volume.

The multi-disciplinary conference was organized by Shuichi Hasegawa (Rikkyo University Tokyo), Christoph Levin and Karen Radner (both LMU Munich) in order to elucidate “The Last Days of the Northern Kingdom of Israel” and to explore with fresh eyes key issues connected with the Fall of Samaria and its narrative that have fuelled scholarly debates since the 19th century. It was held at the building of the Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung in Munich from 15 – 17 March 2017 and brought together speakers from Finland, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States. It received generous funding from a Fostering Joint International Research grant of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (KAKENHI; Subject No. 15KK0061) awarded to Hasegawa, with additional financial support provided by the Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the latter through the Alexander von Humboldt chair in the Ancient History of the Near and Middle East held by Radner (who hosted Hasegawa at LMU Munich during the academic year 2016/17). We wish to thank Denise Bolton for carefully proof-reading and, where necessary, language-editing the contributions to this volume, Alexa Bartelmus and Nikola Wenner for compiling the index and De Gruyter’s Sabina Dabrowski, Katrin Mittmann and Sophie Wagenhofer for their support, care and speed in preparing this publication.

2 Introducing the Sources

It will be helpful to offer a short summary of the types and nature of the available sources and to briefly highlight the problems relating to them. I will use the following categories: (1) extra-biblical sources; (2) biblical sources; and (3) archaeological data.

2.1 Extra-Biblical Sources

Part II of this volume is devoted to this material which includes (1) Assyrian royal inscriptions, (2) the Assyrian Eponym Chronicle, (3) the Babylonian Chronicles, and (4) various Assyrian archival texts.

2.1.1 Assyrian Royal Inscriptions

In the second half of the eighth century BCE, the rulers of the Assyrian Empire conducted a number of military campaigns into the Levant and recorded accounts of these campaigns in their royal annals and other official inscriptions. These mention information such as the names of the kings of the Northern Kingdom, their tribute, and details of the Assyrian campaigns against the kingdom. The significance of these inscriptions lies in the fact that they were composed shortly after the time of the described events.

Three monarchs ruled the Assyrian Empire during the last years of the Northern Kingdom of Israel: Tiglath-pileser III reigned between 745–727 BCE, his son and crown prince Shalmaneser V succeeded him and ruled from 727 to 722 BCE, when his brother Sargon II took the throne by force and reigned from 722 to 705 BCE.¹

After a period of decline, the ascent of Tiglath-pileser to the throne of Assyria marked a new stage in the empire's history. Dozens of his royal inscriptions survive although most of them in a very fragmentary state of preservation. This king's extensive military campaigns are recorded in annals that present his deeds in chronological order and in summary inscriptions that summarize his activities according to geographical considerations.²

The Hebrew Bible refers to Tiglath-pileser quite often, explicitly as well as indirectly (2Kgs 15–16; Isa 7; 8:1–10, 23; 10:9; 17:1–3; Amos 6:2; 1Chr 5:6, 26; 2Chr 28:16–21), and this mirrors his profound influence on the history of the Northern Kingdom. These passages seemingly reflect the collective memory and the developed tradition of this Assyrian ruler and his activities.

1 E.g., Albert Kirk Grayson, "Assyria: Tiglath-pileser III to Sargon II (744–705 B.C.)," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. III/2, second edition, eds. John Boardman, I. E. S. Edwards, E. Sollberger, and N. G. L. Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 71–102.

2 Rykle Borger and Hayim Tadmor, "Zwei Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft aufgrund der Inschriften Tiglathpilesers III.," *ZAW* 94 (1984): 244–51; Hayim Tadmor and Shigeo Yamada, *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (747–727 BC), and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 106: 17–19; 132: 10–11.

Very few royal inscriptions of Shalmaneser V, the successor of Tiglath-pileser III, and especially no annals have survived. The key information on his reign is known from the Assyrian Eponym Chronicle and the Babylonian Chronicles, which we will discuss below.

Sargon II, the successor of Shalmaneser V, further expanded Assyria's territory by extensive military campaigning. He states in his inscriptions that he conquered Samaria and the Land of Humri, as the Northern Kingdom of Israel is conventionally designated in the Assyrian royal inscriptions. It seems that several passages in the Hebrew Bible also refer to this Assyrian king (2Kgs 17:1–24; 18:1–12; Isa 10:27–32; 14:4b–21; 20:1).

Considering the contemporariness of their composition to the events described, the information found in the Assyrian royal inscriptions and especially their chronological sequence is usually deemed reliable. But the available inscriptions refer to the Northern Kingdom of Israel only in passing and thus do not provide adequate information for reconstructing this specific sequence of events. In addition, the accounts are in no way unbiased as the royal inscriptions were primarily designed to convey Assyrian royal ideology.³

2.1.2 The Assyrian Eponym Chronicle

The elaborate version of the Assyrian Eponym List, dubbed the Assyrian Eponym Chronicle, is another important historical source.⁴ Since the late second millennium BCE, *limmu* (or *līmu*) is the Assyrian designation for an official one-year position, whose holder lends his name to the year in which he holds this office. We therefore translate the term as “eponym.” The Eponym List enumerates the holders of the *limmu* office in chronological order, and the Eponym Chronicle supplements this with information about key events affecting all of Assyria, usually just one per year. Although the source is less biased than the inscriptions, it offers only limited information pertaining to the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

³ Cf. Shuichi Hasegawa, “Adad-nērārī III’s Fifth Year in the Saba’a Stela: Historiographical Background,” *RA* 102 (2008): 89–98; id., “Historical and Historiographical Notes on the Pazar-cık Stela,” *Akkadica* 131 (2010): 1–9.

⁴ Alan R. Millard, *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire 910–612 BC* (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1994).

2.1.3 The Babylonian Chronicles

The Babylonian Chronicles laconically record the key events in the history of Babylon. As several Assyrian kings, including Tiglath-pileser III, Shalmaneser V and, intermittently, Sargon II held the crown of Babylon, the Chronicles sometimes incorporate events pertaining to the Assyrian Empire, including the mention of the conquest of Samaria under Shalmaneser V.⁵

2.1.4 Assyrian Archival Texts

Samaria and its population are occasionally mentioned in Assyrian archival texts, such as letters from the state correspondence, administrative texts or private legal documents. These sources usually date to the period after the conquest of the Northern Kingdom.

2.2 Biblical Sources

Relevant source materials are included in (1) the Book of Kings and (2) the Books of the Prophets.

2.2.1 The Book of Kings: 2Kgs 15–18

The most detailed information on the final years of the Northern Kingdom derives from 2Kgs 15–18 in the Hebrew Bible. This source provides details such as the names of the kings, the year of their enthronement and the length of their reign, major events, circumstances of coups d'état, and this is useful in creating a basic chronological framework to reconstruct the history of the kingdom. Yet, there are some problems in the biblical chronology that remain unsolved. Part V of this volume addresses the chronological framework of the Book of Kings.

The text is mostly formulaic in style, describing in brief the reigns of the kings of the Northern Kingdom. It is generally assumed that parts of the accounts

⁵ Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1975), 69–87; Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1993), 179–87.

of a given king's reign go back to original archival records. On the other hand, later redactors are assumed to have added to this material, and the resultant text cannot be regarded as historically accurate. To understand the nature of the text, literary analysis is therefore indispensable. The narrative art of the Book of Kings is investigated in Part VI of this volume.

Most previous studies are based mainly on the Masoretic Text of the Book of Kings and failed to scrutinize the textual history of the Book of Kings. But recent studies demonstrate that the ancient Greek translations of the old Hebrew text of the Book of Kings, such as the Antiochian text widely known as the Lucianic recension of the Septuagint, sometimes preserve older readings.⁶

The Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible whose origins may go back to the third century BCE. The Antiochian text, a revised version of an Old Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, survives in the form of manuscripts from the fourth century CE. Yet, the revision was unequivocally based on a text older than the oldest extant manuscripts of the Septuagint. Thus, the Antiochian text should play an important role in reconstructing an older text of the Book of Kings. Moreover, it has recently been argued that the text of the Book of Kings as preserved in the *Vetus Latina*, a Latin translation of the Old Greek text of the Hebrew Bible, is highly important as well, although the extant manuscript tradition only partially provides the text of the Book of Kings.⁷

The older text does not always corroborate the historical authenticity of the information that it contains. If the text itself is a fiction, regardless of its age, historically accurate information cannot be expected in it. On the other hand, even though the text depends on an older source, information included in the text could have been altered by later editing. For this reason, it is imperative to reconstruct as old a text of the Book of Kings as possible, before using it as historical source for reconstructing the last days of the Northern Kingdom. Part IV of this volume concentrates on the various textual witnesses of the Book of Kings and the reliability of the information they provide.

6 For example, see Shuichi Hasegawa, "The Conquests of Hazael in 2 Kgs 13:22 in the Antiochian Text," *JBL* 133 (2014): 61–76.

7 Natalio Fernández Marcos "Der antiochenische Text der griechischen Bibel in den Samuel- und Königsbüchern (1–4 Kön LXX)," in *Im Brennpunkt: Die Septuaginta, Studien zur Entstehung und Bedeutung der Griechischen Bibel*, Band 2, ed. Siegfried Kreuzer and Jürgen Peter Lesch (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004): 177–213; Alexander Fischer, *Der Text des Alten Testaments, Neubearbeitung der Einführung in die Biblia Hebraica von Ernst Würthwein* (Tübingen: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2009), 138–42; Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Third Edition, Revised and Expanded (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 146–47.

2.2.2 The Books of the Prophets

There are other books in the Hebrew Bible that may contain important information on the last days of the Northern Kingdom. Isa 7–8 refers to the Syro-Ephraimite War, a conflict between the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the anti-Judaeans league of the Northern Kingdom and Aram-Damascus, which is also recorded in 2Kgs 16. In addition, part of the Book of Hosea is sometimes assumed to allude to the situation on the eve of the fall of the Northern Kingdom.

It is generally assumed that collections of the prophets' words or oral traditions concerning their activities lie at the core of the books of the Prophets such as Isaiah and Hosea. Therefore, in order to extract historical information from these books, an approach is required that is different from that employed for the analysis of the Book of Kings, part of which is assumed to be derived from archival sources.

Recently, the difficulty in locating the original words of the prophets, which had been assumed to be the nuclei in the prophetic books, has been recognized, since the prophetic books too have been subject to extensive editing. As a result, the prophetic books are used less when discussing the prophetic figures in the time of the kingdoms and also as a historical source for reconstructing the history of the kingdoms.⁸

On the other hand, some scholars recently argued that, with adequate caution, one can still extract historical information on the last days of the Northern Kingdom from the early prophecies in the Book of Hosea.⁹ Regardless of the validity of this argument, it reflects the view that the state of affairs as described in the Book of Hosea corresponds to the historical situation “at that time.” If so, one must first aim to reconstruct the historical situation “at that time” on the basis of other historical sources before judging the value of the Book of Hosea as a historical source. For this purpose, one must build a rough historical framework based on these other sources and then examine whether or not the description in the Book of Hosea fits in there.

At any rate, because of the process required to examine their historical reliability, and due to the fact that they do not derive from archival sources, the prophetic books can serve only as subsidiary sources for reconstructing the last

⁸ Ehud Ben-Zvi, “The Concept of Prophetic Books and Its Historical Setting,” in *The Production of Prophecy: Constructing Prophecy and Prophets in Yehud*, eds. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (London: Routledge, 2009): 73–95.

⁹ E.g., Nadav Na'aman, “The Book of Hosea as a Source for the Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel,” *BZ* 59 (2015): 232–56.

days of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The prophetic books and their historical value for our topic are discussed in Part VIII of this volume.

2.3 Archaeological Data

Excavations in the Southern Levant have been under way for more than 150 years. Recently, archaeological information has been increasingly consulted for reconstructing the history of ancient Israel.¹⁰ At many of the ruins of the cities in the Northern Kingdom, large-scale destruction layers have been detected that allegedly date to the period of its conquest, as they have been conventionally understood as the results of Tiglath-pileser III's military campaigns.

Samaria, the last capital of the Northern Kingdom, was excavated twice, first in the beginning and then in the middle of the twentieth century.¹¹ In the 1990s, the results of the excavations were re-evaluated by Ron Tappy through extensive analysis of the original field notes and by adopting an updated methodology, which offered a new archaeological basis for considering the conquest of Samaria.¹²

Recent excavations, for example those at Megiddo and Jezreel, have also shed new light on the Assyrian administrative and economic strategy after these sites had been incorporated into the Empire. Archaeological issues concerning the last days of the Northern Kingdom of Israel are discussed in Part III of this volume.

10 This problem is recently discussed in detail in Shuichi Hasegawa, "David and Goliath: Towards a Dialogue between Archaeology and Biblical Studies," in *"Now It Happened in Those Days": Studies in Biblical, Assyrian and Other Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Mordechai Cogan on His 75th Birthday*, eds. Shmuel Ahituv, Amitai Baruch-Unna, Israel Eph'al, Tova Forti, and Jeffrey H. Tigay (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 607–22.

11 George Andrew Reisner, Clarence Stanley Fisher and D. G. Lyon, *Harvard Excavations at Samaria, 1908–1910*, 2 vols. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1924); John Winter Crowfoot and Grace M. Crowfoot, *Samaria-Sebaste 2: Early Ivories from Samaria* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1938); John Winter Crowfoot, Kathleen Mary Kenyon and Eleazar Lipa Sukenik, *The Buildings at Samaria* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1942); John Winter Crowfoot, Grace M. Crowfoot and Kathleen Mary Kenyon, *Samaria-Sebaste III: The Objects* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1957).

12 Ron E. Tappy, *The Archaeology of Israelite Samaria, Volume I: Early Iron Age through the Ninth Century B.C.E.* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992); id., *The Archaeology of Israelite Samaria, Volume II: The Eighth Century B.C.E.* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001).

3 A Brief Synopsis of Previous Research

Although many books are devoted to the history of ancient Israel, no single volume comprehensively deals with the final years of the Northern Kingdom. In this short overview of the history of research, we shall concentrate on the two topics that have been the main focus of historical research on this period: one is the Syro-Ephraimite War, the other the exact date of the conquest of Samaria.

Regarding the Syro-Ephraimite War, Stuart A. Irvine discussed the historical situation of the Southern Kingdom of Judah during this conflict in its international setting in a 1990 monograph, based on the analysis of the Hebrew Bible and the Assyrian royal inscriptions.¹³ According to Irvine, Ahaz's request for help from Assyria, as described in 2Kgs 16, is a dramatization by the Deuteronomist and therefore cannot be regarded as historically factual. Whether one accepts Irvine's view or not, his observation that the description in the Book of Kings does not reflect the historical event is reasonable.

Irvine's primary interest lies in the historical circumstances of the prophecies in Isa 6–9, and how a prophet in the Hebrew Bible can be understood in relation to kingship. Hence, although Irvine paid attention also to the Northern Kingdom, his main focus rests on the situation in the Southern Kingdom. The traditional view of historical biblical scholarship that uncritically relies on the text in Isa 7 is to assume an anti-Assyrian alliance between Aram-Damascus and the Northern Kingdom of Israel.¹⁴ According to this line of research, the Northern Kingdom and Aram-Damascus allied in order to attack the Southern Kingdom of Judah, which had refused to join the anti-Assyrian alliance, with a view to replace the Judahite king with a puppet ruler of their choosing who would join the alliance. However, no source other than Isa 7 attests to that purpose of the anti-

13 Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis* (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1990).

14 Joachim Begrich, "Der syrisch-ephraimitische Krieg und seine weltpolitischen Zusammenhänge," *ZDMG* 83 (1929): 213–37; Bustenay Oded, "The Historical Background of the Syro-Ephraimite War Re-Considered," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 153–65; Herbert Donner, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel und seiner Nachbarn in Grundzügen, Teil 2: Von der Königszeit bis zu Alexander dem Großen mit einem Ausblick auf die Geschichte des Judentums bis Kochba*, 4th edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 337; Martin Noth, *Geschichte Israels*, 10th edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 235; Nadav Na'aman, "Forced Participation in Alliances in the Course of the Assyrian Campaigns to the West," in *Ah Assyria... Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, ed. Mordechai Cogan and Israel Eph'al (Jerusalem: Magnes 1991): 80–98, esp. 91–94; Christian Frevel, *Geschichte Israels* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 240.

Assyrian alliance. It is therefore requisite to examine once again the actions of other kingdoms in the region, as mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions, in order to gauge just how likely this hypothesis is.

Turning to the conquest of Samaria, Bob Becking has published a monograph on this topic in 1992.¹⁵ Using three sources, namely, 2Kgs, the Assyrian royal inscriptions, and the Babylonian Chronicles, Becking supported Hugo Winckler's and Hayim Tadmor's view that Samaria was conquered twice.¹⁶ He dated the first conquest to 723 BCE (Tadmor: 722 BCE) and the second to 720 BCE. Becking also elucidated the deportation of people to the territory that previously belonged to the Northern Kingdom, as well as the deportation of the Israelites to other regions, by using various Assyrian and Babylonian sources. His most recent views on the subject are presented in Part I of this volume.

No single available source relates two consecutive conquests of Samaria. The two-conquest hypothesis was forwarded in order to explain the inconsistency seen in the description of the conqueror of Samaria between 2Kgs 17:3–6//18:9–10 and the Babylonian Chronicles on the one hand, and the Assyrian royal inscriptions on the other hand. The first two identify the conqueror as Shalmaneser V (727–722 BCE), whereas the inscriptions of Sargon II (722–705 BCE) describe the conquest of Samaria as a major achievement of this ruler's early years. It seems significant that the Book of Kings and the Babylonian Chronicles, although different in viewpoint and language, agree on the identity of the conqueror of Samaria, and this has led to the formulation of the two-conquests hypothesis.

On the other hand, there are scholars who suggest that only one conquest of Samaria took place. Nadav Na'aman suggested that Samaria, even if it was besieged by Shalmaneser V, was conquered only once by Sargon II in 720 BCE.¹⁷ S. J. Park tried to solve the above-mentioned problem by explaining that Sargon II conquered Samaria under Shalmaneser V, before his enthronement (722 BCE).¹⁸

15 Bob Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

16 Hugo Winckler, "Beiträge zur quellenscheidung der Königsbücher," in id., *Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen* (Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1892): 1–54, esp. 15–20; Hayim Tadmor, "The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study," *JCS* 12 (1958): 33–40; Kyle Lawson Younger, Jr., "The Fall of Samaria in Light of Recent Research," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 461–82.

17 Nadav Na'aman, "The Historical Background to the Conquest of Samaria," *Bib* 71 (1990): 206–25; Julian E. Reade, "Sargon's Campaigns of 720, 716, and 715 B.C.: Evidence from the Sculptures," *JNES* 35 (1976): 100–101; M. Christine Tetley, "The Date of Samaria's Fall as a Reason for Rejecting the Hypothesis of Two Conquests," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 59–77.

18 Sung Jin Park, "A New Historical Reconstruction of the Fall of Samaria," *Bib* 93 (2012): 98–106

Overall, there is no scholarly consensus as to the date of the conquest and the conqueror of Samaria.¹⁹

4 The Contributions Offered in the Present Volume

Leading scholars from several disciplines contribute to the debate by presenting the results of their research in this volume.

With methodological reflections on his previous work, Bob Becking attempts to reconsider the fall of Samaria in a way that deliberately gives less priority to highly biased textual sources such as the Hebrew Bible and the Assyrian royal inscriptions. Based primarily on archaeological data, Becking points out that the Assyrian Empire's interest in the conquest of the Southern Levant in the second half of the eighth century BCE was economically oriented rather than political.

Based on the extant Assyrian royal inscriptions, Jamie Novotny suggests that more information on the last days of the Northern Kingdom may once have been given in the "now-lost sources" of the three Assyrian monarchs Tiglath-pileser III, Shalmaneser V, and Sargon II. He concludes that especially inscriptions of the first two kings may well have contained more detailed information on the subject of Samaria.

Eckart Frahm presents new editions of eighteen passages from inscriptions of Sargon II of Assyria that deal with the fall of Samaria. He demonstrates how misleading the information from Assyrian royal inscriptions can be at times and highlights the resultant difficulty in reconstructing the history of the last days of the Northern Kingdom. Taking into account all the available data, Frahm reaches the provisional conclusion that Shalmaneser V was the Assyrian king who was solely responsible for the conquest of Samaria, while the deportation of its inhabitants took place under Sargon II's command.

F. Mario Fales, while following Nadav Na'aman's hypothesis of a single conquest of Samaria, explains the possible economic motivation ("grand strategy") behind Assyria's thrust into the Northern Kingdom, such as better access to olive oil and wine, to the maritime trade of the Phoenicians, to army horses and spe-

¹⁹ Cf. John H. Hayes and Jeffrey K. Kuan, "The Final Years of Samaria (730–720 B.C.)," *Bib* 72 (1991): 153–81; Gershon Galil, "The Last Years of the Kingdom of Israel and the Fall of Samaria," *CBQ* 57 (1995): 52–64.

cialized military professionals. Fales regards the supposed three-year-siege of Samaria as non-real event.

Karen Radner deals with the fate of its people after the fall of Samaria within the framework of the well-organized management of the populations of the vast lands under Assyrian rule. A variety of contemporary Assyrian sources show that Samaritans with specific and specialized skill sets seemingly enjoyed comparatively high status, once resettled.

Robert G. Morkot summarizes the ongoing debates over the complicated Egyptian chronology in the period of the last days of the Northern Kingdom. Morkot suggests that the Northern Kingdom most probably had commercial and possibly also close political relations with the Libyan rulers in the Delta, rather than with the Kushite power in the south.

Exploring the language of conquest in Sargon II's annals and the archaeological record of the old excavations of Samaria, Ron E. Tappy points out the problems in the excavators' dating of Samaria's stratigraphical sequence. He concludes that Samaria escaped wholesale destruction at the hands of the Assyrian forces.

Based on updated archaeological information, Norma Franklin reassesses the function of Megiddo and Jezreel before and after the campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria to the region. Well integrated into the Assyrian provincial system, both continued to function as key military and administrative sites in the region.

Timo Tekoniemi's critical analysis of 2Kgs 17 demonstrates the significance of text-critical study of the biblical text before using it as a historical source. There are a few instances in which the Old Greek text and the Masoretic text of the chapter do not agree and, although most commentators have uncritically given priority to the Masoretic text, Tekoniemi argues that there are good reasons to take the Old Greek Text more seriously into account.

A close literary analysis of 2Kgs 17:3–6 and 18:9–11 leads Dan'el Kahn to propose that the former is topically organized, derived from an official Israelite source, while the latter is a late redactional insertion, lacking any historically reliable information.

Christoph Levin likewise regards 2Kgs 18:9–11 as secondary but he finds secondary elements also in 2Kgs 17:3–4 which largely comprises later theological comments. Levin reconstructs the original record using 2Kgs 17:5–6 and 18:9–11 as a succinct account of Shalmaneser V's conquest of Samaria and his deportation of its inhabitants to various places in the Assyrian Empire.

Kristin Weingart challenges an old conundrum of biblical chronology in 2Kgs 15–18. Assuming the change of the New Year in the Northern Kingdom under Assyrian influence during Menahem's reign, and identifying Jotham and

Ahaz as one and the same person, Weingart provides an ingenious solution for the difficulties encountered in the text.

Steven L. McKenzie discusses the same chronological issue. Reconsidering the merits and problems of previous scholarly suggestions, McKenzie cannot find an ultimate solution and regards the chronological data in 2Kgs 15 as “unusable for historical reconstruction.”

Analyzing the description of the kings of the Northern Kingdom in 2Kgs 15, Christian Frevel draws attention to their negative portrayal, which he sees as a deliberate strategy by the author. Frevel warns against using the information in the chapter for historical reconstructions.

Basing his view on the analysis of the literary structure and the narrative pragmatic of 2Kgs 17, Michael Pietsch regards the text as a unit, while he rejects the idea that the information given would have originated at the Northern court. For him, the complexity of the source allows us neither to reconstruct the course of events nor to identify the Assyrian conqueror of Samaria.

Georg Hentschel attempts to perceive in the descriptions in 2Kgs 15 and 17 the change of foreign policy toward the Assyrian Empire during the last years of the Northern Kingdom and highlights how Assyria’s presence in the region might have exerted influence upon the chain of events that finally led the Northern Kingdom to its fall.

With a focus on methodological considerations, Martti Nissinen discusses the difficulty in gleaning historically reliable information from the Book of Hosea because of its later editing, despite the fact that parts of the Book date to the last days of the Northern Kingdom.

Hugh G. M. Williamson sifts through the Book of Isaiah to identify passages that possibly go back to the prophet who employs the terms “Ephraim,” “Samaria,” and once “Jacob” for designating the Northern Kingdom. Williamson defends the view that the concept of “Israel” for the two nations must have existed even before the Fall of Samaria as reflected in Isaiah’s usage of the term.

With these papers, our volume brings together leading scholars from different fields of research and, for the first time, all available data in order to discuss the problems concerning the last days of the Northern Kingdom from various perspectives. This will help, I would hope, to reach a better and deeper understanding of this crucial period of Levantine history. It is possible to argue that it was these events that triggered the birth of a “New Israel” in the Southern Kingdom of Judah in the following decades, and that eventually led to the formation of the Hebrew Bible and its underlying theology.

Reader of this volume should keep in mind that, although its contributors have tackled the historical issues from different perspectives, many are still inconclusive and thus open for further discussion. At times, the conclusions of in-

dividual contributors are at odds with those reached by others. As ever, we can yearn for the discovery of additional sources that might resolve difficulties and achieve consensus. But in the meantime, I sincerely hope that the present volume, with its interdisciplinary approach, will provide rich material for future research on the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Abbreviations in this volume follow *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta GA: SBL Press, 2014).

Part I: **Setting the Scene**

Bob Becking

How to Encounter an Historical Problem?

“722–720 BCE” as a Case Study

1 De ondergang van Samaria (1985)

In November 1985, I defended my doctoral thesis at Utrecht University. I wrote my dissertation on the Assyrian conquest of the capital city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel from an historical as well as from an exegetical point of view.¹ Although I tried to escape the traditional way of history-writing as a narrative about kings and battles, I now see that I was too event-oriented and influenced by written sources. In other words, I took texts, especially the Hebrew Bible, as a starting point for my investigation then looked for support in other pieces of evidence. Additionally, I was too focused on verifying isolated events. Rethinking my approach leads me to three questions:

- a. What is a text?
- b. How does one properly encounter the past?
- c. What about the *histoire conjoncturelle*?

2 What is a Text?

What is a text? Or more specifically: how does a text relate to an event? The Hebrew Bible is a text, or better, a collection of texts partly of a literary character. This observation opens a whole line of questions. There seems to be a dichotomy in the basic interpretation of texts. Novels, for instance, are generally understood to be fictional. When Biblical texts are labelled as literary texts, are they by im-

I would like to thank Shuichi Hasegawa for inviting me to the stimulating meeting in Munich. I have learned much from all the other papers and from the fine and open discussion. Steven McKenzie and Ronald Tappy kindly provided some suggestions to improve my English while Denise Bolton (Munich) language-edited the complete manuscript. All remaining errors are of course mine.

¹ Bob Becking, *De ondergang van Samaria: Historische, exegetische en theologische opmerkingen bij II Koningen 17* (Diss. Utrecht; Meppel: Krips Repro, 1985); the historical introduction was re-worked into English: Bob Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

plication fictional? And the other way around: are non-fiction texts by implication not literary? I will try to elucidate this point with an example. Many good books on history are praised for their literary quality. A good style and mastery of the language often leads to books that are both informative and a pleasure to read. The question is: how do such books relate to reality? They certainly refer to events that happened in real-time. They are, however, not equal to the event(s). Such texts do relate to reality since they are descriptions of the events.

In a comparable way, Biblical texts – of whatever literary quality – should be construed as descriptions of (parts of) reality. In fact, they are to be understood as interpretations of what might have happened. Even when a Biblical text refers to an event that with great certainty can be classified in the category ‘did really happen’ the text does not equal the event. It is – not unlike a restaurant bill – a selection of parts of the event presented from a specific point of view. Texts inform the reader about the view of the author on the past.²

As for the period of the last days of the Kingdom of Israel, it should be kept in mind that neither the Biblical accounts³ nor the Assyrian inscriptions⁴ equal the event. Both sets inform the reader about the view of their authors on the assumed events, and give hints about those events.

3 The Source as a Container of Evidence

This brings me to the following remark. Texts are historical sources in the same way that artefacts are. There is, however, a problem. This problem is connected to the fact that texts are complex by nature: They are built up in a way comparable to atoms. In a text we can find particles and forces, i.e. fermions and gluons.⁵ In this metaphor, the particles are the singular statements about the past – such as “Sargon II conquered the city of Samaria”. The gluons in a text are the ideology and the narrative structure that hold these particles together. In other words, a

² See Chris Lorenz, *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit: eine Einführung in die Geschichtstheorie* (Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau, 1997).

³ 2Kgs 17:1–6; 18:9–11.

⁴ Cf. the essays by Eckart Frahm and Jamie Novotny in this volume. The material is presented and discussed in e.g. Becking, *The Fall of Samaria*, 21–45 and Kyle Lawson Younger Jr., “The Fall of Samaria in Light of Recent Research,” *CBQ* 61 (1999): 461–82 is incomplete due to publication of new Assyrian texts.

⁵ See on these particles Toshiyuki Morii, Chong-Sa Lim and Soumyendra N. Mukherjee, *The Physics of the Standard Model and Beyond* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2004).

distinction should be made between individual clauses – and their historical (im)possibility – and the narrative as a whole. The narrative structure as a whole is the matrix that is created by the narrator, or historian, to convince the reader of the truth of his or her view on the events. It is for this reason that a historian has to deconstruct a given source in search of trustworthy particles. Only then can the Hebrew Bible be seen as a “source of information” at the level of its various particles, but not at the level of the text as a whole.

A warning should be taken from the philosophy of history of Robin G. Collingwood.⁶ Collingwood was looking for a way out of the dilemma between “realism” and “scepticism”. Realism is the position that the sources inform us in a realistic way about the past. A sceptic is of the opinion that the past is inaccessible. By implication, we do not have any real knowledge of the past. Collingwood tried to overcome this dilemma by elaborating a view on the character of so-called historical sources. These traces of the past are available and knowable in the present. All the historian has in hand are the particles of evidence mirroring the past. The evidence makes it possible to know the past, but only in a restricted way. The task of the historian is to collect as much evidence as possible and then construct a personal image of the past. In this re-enactment, models and imagination play a role. The historian cannot do without metaphorical language to describe in an approximate and incomplete way the events mirrored in the sources.

In combining both these approaches to the character of written evidence, I have come to the position that the Old Testament text should be treated primarily as a collection of trace evidence. The Old Testament supplies its readers with diverse vestiges of the past that, one way or another, mirror the past. These traces can be (and have been) treated differently. This difference is partly related to the ideology of the historian – be it minimalistic, or maximalistic, or something in between. Of greater importance, however, is the awareness of other traces of evidence and the matrix in which the historian “reads” this variety of evidence.⁷

⁶ Robin G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History: Revised Edition with Lectures 1926–1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). On Collingwood’s historiography see now Dale Jacquette, “Collingwood on Historical Authority and Historical Imagination,” *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 3 (2009): 55–78, and Jan van der Dussen, *History as a Science: The Philosophy of R. G. Collingwood* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012).

⁷ Interesting remarks on this can be found in David Henige, *Historical Evidence and Argument* (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005); Kimberly Anderson, “The Footprint and the Stepping Foot: Archival Records, Evidence, and Time,” *Archival Science* 12 (2012): 1–23; and Tim Kenyon, “Oral History and the Epistemology of Testimony,” *Social Epistemology* 30 (2016): 45–66.

I will come back to this below. In other words, texts – as I see it now – are minor pieces of evidence: disconnected footprints in the disturbed snow of the past. They also contain “clues”: references to the past that go beyond the direct context of the given piece of evidence and which inform in an indirect way about the past.⁸ These traces and clues, however, are wrapped in an often biased narrative.

4 The Point of View as a Power Position

Texts are not neutral containers. The focalization-theory of Gérard Genette argues that the information in a text is always steered by the narrator.⁹ The narrator makes the selection out of the available material and connects this selection into the order of the given text. The reader is thus forced to look at the *fable* – a term for the basic narration that became text in a narrative¹⁰ – the way the narrator wants the reader to look at it. The narrator is like the hole in a shoebox through which a diorama can be seen. Hence the narrator of a text is in a power position and the reader is dependent on this sluice. It is the narrator who forces one to look at the ensemble of the narrative from his or her point of view. With regard to the Hebrew Bible, this implies that historians should at least be aware of the fact that information about the past is sluiced through a specific point of view. It is not neutral reports that are presented.

In view of the written evidence concerning the Assyrian conquest of Samaria, it should be noted that we are forced to look at the short narratives in the Book of Kings, as well as the seemingly objective reports in the Assyrian royal inscriptions, through a specific lens. 2Kgs 17:1–6 and 18:9–11 represent the

⁸ Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989; translated from the 1986 Italian publication).

⁹ Gérard Genette, “Discours du récit: essai de méthode,” in id., *Figures III* (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1972); id., *Nouveau discours du récit* (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1983) = id., *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989); see also Willem Bronzwaer, “Implied Author, Extradiegetic Narrator and Public Reader: Gérard Genette’s Narratological Model and the Reading Version of *Great Expectations*,” *Neophilologus* 621 (1978): 1–18; Mieke Bal, “The Narrating and the Focalizing: a Theory of the Agents in Narrative,” *Style* 17 (1983): 234–69; François Tolmie, *Narratology and Biblical Narratives: a Practical Guide* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), esp. 29–38; Michael Hoey, *Textual Interaction: an Introduction to Written Discourse Analysis* (London/New York: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁰ This concept should not be confused with the fable as a form in folk literature, such as the fables of Aesop or de la Fontaine.

view of the Deuteronomistic historian(s) on the past.¹¹ The pertinent inscriptions of Sargon II reveal the view of the Assyrian court-writers and their royal ideology.¹² They are written to impress the populace, especially those who visited the royal palace, as well as to account for the responsibilities of the Assyrian ruler given to him by the Assyrian gods.

Although deportations are referred to, the effect that those events would have had on the lives of “ordinary people” is silenced, both in the Hebrew Bible and the Assyrian inscriptions. The reports on exile and deportation are narrated from the focus of temple and court.

In sum, it is possible to take written texts as the starting point for an historical inquest. In view of the remarks made, it is better not to take these written texts as a starting point for finding the answer(s) of the historical problem(s). How then to proceed?

5 A Five Dimensional Matrix

More than twenty years ago, Manfred Weippert wrote a very interesting contribution to ancient Israelite historiography.¹³ I agree with him that the historiography of ancient Israel had arrived at a crossroads around 1990 and that it was important to take the right turn. Weippert hinted at two methodological weaknesses in ancient Israelite historiography.

Firstly, he argued that much of the traditional historiography is too “event-oriented”. Histories of ancient Israel focus on important events in the assumed history. This implies that an important tendency in “general” historiography is

¹¹ From the abundance of literature on the Deuteronomistic historian(s), I only refer to the synthesizing work by Thomas C. Römer, *The So-called Deuteronomistic History: a Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London/New York: Continuum, 2005).

¹² Much has been written on Mesopotamian royal ideology, see recently: Douglas J. Green, “I Undertook Great Works”: *The Ideology of Domestic Achievements in West Semitic Royal Inscriptions* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Linda T. Darling, *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East: The Circle of Justice from Mesopotamia to Globalization* (London/New York: Routledge, 2013), 15–31; Vladimir Sazonov, “Some Remarks Concerning the Development of the Theology of War in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *The Religious Aspects of War in the Ancient Near East, Greece, and Rome*, ed. Krzysztof Ulanowski (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 23–50; David T. Rowlands, “Imperial Ideology in the Neo-Assyrian Empire,” *Teaching History* 50 (2016): 4–7.

¹³ Manfred Weippert, “Geschichte Israels am Scheideweg,” TRu 58 (1993): 71–103; the article is in fact a lengthy review of Herbert Donner, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel und seiner Nachbarn in Grundzügen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1984), and its reprint in one volume in 1987.

passed by. The French historiographical revolution known as the “Annales School”¹⁴ is overlooked by almost all historians of ancient Israel. This implies that there is seldom a window into daily life. Weippert observed that the inclination of historians of ancient Israel to focus on events often results in closing the ways that would lead to an understanding of processes in ancient Israel at the level of *longue durée* or even at the level of the *histoire conjuncturelle*.¹⁵ Fortunately, in the 20 years following this remarkable contribution, we have seen some shifts in the field.¹⁶

Secondly, Weippert argues that scholars – especially biblical scholars – writing a “History of Israel” too easily take the biblical narrative at face value and use it as the backbone of their (re)construction.

In order to overcome these weaknesses, Weippert proposes approaching the past through a set of five windows. In his opinion, the following five dimensions need to be explored: (1) landscape; (2) climate; (3) archaeology; (4) epigraphy; and (5) biblical texts. The past needs to be looked at through these five windows and in the order given.¹⁷ On the basis of the evidence found, a *histoire conjuncturelle*¹⁸ can be designed. In the next sections, I will apply this approach in connection with the “The Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel”.

5.1 Landscape

A look at the landscape of ancient Israel/Palestine makes clear that this was a hilly area that contained various and differing zones. The mountainous core of Judah and Samaria was blessed with fertile soil. However, this core area, as

14 A good introduction is to be found in Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: the Annales School, 1929–89* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

15 On this concept see Fernand Braudel, “Histoire et sciences sociales: La longue durée,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 13 (1958): 725–53.

16 Important voices being Hans M. Barstad, *History and the Hebrew Bible: Studies in Ancient Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Kurt L. Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: a Textbook on History and Religion Second Edition* (London/New York: Bloomington, 2013), 23–65; Christian Frevel, *Geschichte Israels* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2015), 17–41; Lester L. Grabbe, *Ancient Israel: What Do We Know and How Do We Know it?* (London/New York: Bloomington, 2017; rev. ed.), 3–38.

17 This matrix is more fruitful than that proposed by Heather Gerow, “Methodology in Ancient History: Reconstructing the Fall of Samaria,” *Constellations* 2 (2010): no. 1, who operates with the model to start by the Hebrew Bible and look for corroborations in other sources and findings.

18 On this concept see Braudel, “Histoire et Sciences”; with critical remarks by Gerrit van Roon, “Historians and long waves,” *Futures* 13 (1981): 383–88.

well as the surrounding semi-arid zones, constantly required rainwater and a technology to prevent run-off. In other words, the area had great agricultural potential but needed an intelligent cultivator. The territory of the Northern Kingdom was divided into various zones. The presence of hills and mountains created a patchwork of semi-independent agricultural entities. This element certainly slowed the pace of nation-building after the collapse of the Bronze Age culture. The Hebrew Bible describes the Northern Kingdom as a complex of ten different tribes. I will not argue for the historicity of this tradition, but only note that the landscape was ripe for regionalization. These tribal areas might eventually have unified.¹⁹ However, the different identities might have survived for considerable time. Pride in one's tribal identity in addition or opposition to the overarching national identity probably endured until the Babylonian Exile. The presence of various tribal factions – and their different ambitions – might have negatively affected the alertness of the central organs of power, an issue that could have contributed to the internal weakness of the Northern Kingdom at the eve of destruction.²⁰

5.2 Climate

Having a semi-arid climate, the territory of the Kingdom of Israel was strongly dependent on rainfall for its agriculture. The way in which the population coped with this problem will be discussed in the next section. The Iron Age I–II period coincided with a period of global cooling. Climate in the Iron Age II–III period remained stable in ancient Israel.²¹ We can therefore assume that no specific impulses from a (sudden) change in climate would have influenced the course of events leading to the end of the kingdom.

¹⁹ On this process see Alexander H. Joffe, “The Rise of Secondary States in the Iron Age Levant,” *JESHO* 45 (2002): 425–67.

²⁰ This view, for instance in an antagonism between ‘Gileadites’ and ‘Manassites’ as argued for by John Gray, *I & II Kings* (London: SCM Press, 1977; third ed.) or William H. Shea, “The Date and Significance of the Samaria Ostraca,” *IEJ* 27 (1977): 16–27, is difficult to test.

²¹ See, e.g. Arie S. Issar, *Water Shall Flow from the Rock: Hydrology and Climate in the Lands of the Bible* (Berlin/New York: Springer, 1990); Lester L. Grabbe, “The Kingdom of Israel from Omri to the Fall of Samaria: If We Only Had the Bible ...,” in *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2007): 54–99.

5.3 Archaeology

In my monograph on the Assyrian conquest, I briefly discussed the archaeological evidence.²² As I now see it, I was then much too focused on the military and administrative aspects of events. I scrutinized the archaeological evidence for traces of destruction at a variety of sites, as well as for traces of the administrative take-over by the Assyrians, by looking at the construction of buildings that could be interpreted as Assyrian bureaucratic centers. I now have quite a different set of questions with which to “read” the archaeological evidence. Firstly, does the evidence support or challenge the assumption that the change in political power had little influence on rural communities in the territory?²³ Secondly, what happened in Samaria? And thirdly, what do we know about the Assyrian military presence in the area?

I will start with a side remark. As a matter of fact, in my earlier thesis, I drew the correct conclusion that the archaeological evidence was insufficient to solve the chronological riddle.²⁴

Regarding the first question, the archaeological data from areas outside Samaria provides no evidence for the complete destruction or disruption of the Israelite countryside.²⁵ The fact that the agricultural terraces remained intact can be seen as a clue to the Assyrian interest in maintaining food production. During the Iron Age II period some technological improvements in the system of terrace agriculture took place. This system is a typical element of the *longue durée*. In the Levant, the construction of terraces on hill slopes has very ancient (even pre-historic) roots.²⁶ During the Early Bronze Age I period, this terrace technique was

22 Becking, *The Fall of Samaria*, 56–60.

23 A good starting point for this exercise is to be found in Magen Broshi and Israel Finkelstein, “The Population of Palestine in Iron Age II,” *BASOR* 287 (1992): 47–60.

24 Becking, *The Fall of Samaria*, 56–60.

25 See also Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 242–43.

26 From the Natufian site Nahal Oren four architectural terraces are known that supported a settlement of about 13 hut-dwellings, see Moshe Stekelis and Tamar Yizraeli, “Excavations at Nahal Oren: A Preliminary Report,” *IEJ* 13 (1963): 1–12; see also Ian Kuijt and Nigel Goring-Morris, “Foraging, Farming, and Social Complexity in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic of the Southern Levant: A Review and Synthesis,” *Journal of World Prehistory* 16 (2002): 361–440; Guy Bar-Oz, Tamar Dayan, Daniel Kaufman and Mina Weinstein-Evron, “The Natufian Economy at el-Wad Terrace with Special Reference to Gazelle Exploitation Patterns,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 31 (2004): 217–31.

implemented on a larger scale.²⁷ This technology helped to arrest the run-off water, making it useful for agricultural purposes. Additionally, the terrace system meant that more horizontal surfaces for agricultural use came into existence, which made the work for the cultivator much easier. A system of terraces is also very helpful in avoiding erosion.²⁸ The presence of a developed system of agricultural terraces contains an important clue. The system hints at an advanced level of agricultural development. Combining the terrace system with the deployment of the iron-tipped plough²⁹ farmers were able to produce more than their local need. This surplus was important as a reserve in times of drought or crop failure. On the other hand, the surplus was also needed to pay off local elites in exchange for their protection.³⁰ In the territory of the Northern Kingdom, the technology of food production on terraces continued after the Assyrians took over the capital city of Samaria.

Moving to the city of Samaria itself, a few remarks must be made. Crowfoot and Kenyon's excavations brought to light various indications of demolition and destruction. Kenyon classified these traces as silent witnesses to a massive Assyrian conquest of the city. In her view, the overwhelming power of the Assyrian army overpowered the Israelite defence-lines by destroying great parts of the city and its buildings.³¹ Stig Forsberg challenged this interpretation, suggesting it was biased towards biblical traditions. In his opinion the traces do not refer to a single eighth century destruction of the city but are witnesses to a variety of attacks on the city from tribal conflicts within the Kingdom of Israel as well as from without: from the Assyrians, via the Scythians, up to Roman times. In his view Kathleen Kenyon telescoped evidence from a long time period into the short

27 See Nelson Glueck, "Further Explorations in Eastern Palestine," *BASOR* 86 (1942), 14–24; Issar, *Water Shall Flow from the Rock*, 123–40; Pierre de Miroscheddji, "Tel Yarmut, 1992," *IEJ* 42 (1992): 265–72.

28 See, e.g., David C. Hopkins, *The Highlands of Canaan: Agricultural Life in the Early Iron Age* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1985), 173–86; Hendrik J. Bruins, M. Evenari and U. Nessler, "Rainwater-Harvesting for Food Production in Arid Zones," *Applied Geography* 6 (1986): 13–32; Karl W. Butzer, "Environmental History in the Mediterranean World: Cross-Disciplinary Investigation of Cause-and-Effect for Degradation and Soil Erosion," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 32 (2005): 1773–800.

29 See Hopkins, *The Highlands of Canaan*, 217–23.

30 On the development of agriculture see Patrick Nolan and Gerhard Lenski, *Human Societies* (Boulder AZ: Paradigm, 2004).

31 See, e.g., John W. Crowfoot, Grace M. Crowfoot and Kathleen M. Kenyon, *The Objects from Samaria* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1957); Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Royal Cities of the Old Testament* (New York: Schocken, 1971).

time slot of the last days of the Kingdom of Israel.³² Ron Tappy, too, referred to the methodological weaknesses in Kenyon's reconstruction. According to him, Kenyon's work suffers from the lack of a clear stratigraphy – an argument that parallels Forsberg's. Kenyon's documentation of the find spots of the evidence is – in Tappy's view – sloppy and loose. If I understand him correctly, some of the traces can be connected to the Assyrian assault. The city, however, was not completely devastated. The presence of Israelite-Assyrian pottery indicates that the tell remained occupied.³³

There are a few archaeological clues about the Assyrian military presence in the area. Fantalkin and Tal have re-examined the remains of a fortress at Tell Qudadi (Tell esh-Shuna), located on the northern bank of the mouth of the Yarkon River. Their analysis of the ceramic assemblage made clear that the site was only established in the second half of the eighth century BCE. They argue that this stronghold should not be interpreted as an Israelite defensive fortress, but as an Assyrian establishment that secured Assyrian trade along the *via maris*.³⁴ This would indicate that the Assyrian interest was more focused on trade along the Mediterranean coast than it was on the agricultural potential of the hill country. In addition, Finkelstein convincingly argued that the tower excavated by Albright and Lapp at Tell el-Ful³⁵ was first constructed in the Iron IIC period as an Assyrian watchtower commanding the northern approach to Jerusalem.³⁶ This military structure needs to be construed as a defensive measure

32 Stig Forsberg, *Near Eastern Destruction Datings as Sources for Greek and Near Eastern Iron Age Chronology: Archaeological and Historical Studies: The cases of Samaria (722 BC) and Tarsus (696 BC)* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1995), esp. 25–36.

33 Ron E. Tappy, *The Archaeology of Israelite Samaria, Volume II: The Eighth Century BCE* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001), 351–441; id., “The Final Years of Israelite Samaria: Toward a Dialogue between Texts and Archaeology,” in *Up to the Gates of Ekron: Essays on the Archaeology and History of the Eastern Mediterranean in Honor of Seymour Gitin*, ed. Sidnie White Crawford and Amnon Ben-Tor (Jerusalem: W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research/Israel Exploration Society, 2007), 258–79. Note that Israel Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel* (Atlanta GA: SBL Press, 2013), does not refer to this question or the work of Tappy.

34 Alexander Fantalkin and Oren Tal, “Re-Discovering the Iron Age Fortress at Tell Qudadi in the Context of Neo-Assyrian Imperialistic Policies,” *PEQ* 141 (2009): 188–206; see also Yifat Thareani, “The Empire and the “Upper Sea”: Assyrian Control Strategies along the Southern Levantine Coast,” *BASOR* 375 (2016): 77–102.

35 See Nancy L. Lapp, “Casemate Walls in Palestine and the Late Iron II Casemate at Tell el-Ful (Gibeah),” *BASOR* 223 (1976): 25–42.

36 Israel Finkelstein, “Tell el-Ful Revisited: The Assyrian and Hellenistic Periods (With a New Identification),” *PEQ* 143 (2011): 106–18.

against a possible attack from Judah. In a different way, the Tell el-Ful tower served the Assyrian interests in the area of the former Kingdom of Israel.

An interesting remark has been made by a group of osteo-archaeologists. According to them, human remains dating from the Iron Age IIB period Levant – when the Assyrian Empire was at its height – only rarely manifest trauma to the skull, left forearm, vertebrae, and ribs. The few existing examples could be interpreted as referring to war-time circumstances. The great majority of intact skeletons hint that the Assyrians were not as cruel and unrelenting towards their enemies as is often supposed by tradition.³⁷

In sum, the Assyrian take-over was less brutal than often imagined. The evidence hints that the Assyrians wanted to rule over the territory in order to safeguard their economic interests, such as the trade route along the coast and the remittance of the agricultural surplus.

5.4 Epigraphy

There are no paleo-Hebrew inscriptions that can directly be connected to the Assyrian conquest of Samaria. Unfortunately, there is no counterpart to the Lachish ostraca that describe the fear that arose in this Judaeen stronghold during the campaign of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem in the early sixth century BCE.³⁸ Fortunately, we have some material to work with. The Samaria ostraca document the delivery of wine and oil from various districts to the court in Samaria around the middle of the eighth century BCE.³⁹ The absence of compara-

³⁷ H. Cohen, V. Slon, A. Barash, H. May, B. Medlej and I. Hershkovitz, “Assyrian Attitude Towards Captive Enemies: a 2700-Year-Old Paleo-Forensic Study,” *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 23 (2013): 265–80; Susan G. Sheridan, “Bioarchaeology in the Ancient Near East: Challenges and Future Directions for the Southern Levant,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 162 (2017): 110–52.

³⁸ Lak (6):1.1–21; editio princeps: Harry Torczyner, *Lachish I: The Lachish Letters* (London/New York: Oxford University Press, 1938).

³⁹ Sam (8):1.1–102; see Shea, “The Date and Significance of the Samaria Ostraca.” On the administration and the commodities see Baruch Rosen, “Wine and Oil Allocations in the Samaria Ostraca,” *TA* 13/14 (1986–87): 39–45; Meindert Dijkstra, “Chronological Problems of the Eighth Century BCE: a New Proposal for Dating the Samaria Ostraca,” in *Past, Present, Future: The Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor and Harry F. van Rooy (Leiden: Brill, 2000): 76–87; Avraham Faust, “Household Economies in the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah,” in *Household Archaeology in Ancient Israel and Beyond*, ed. Assaf Yasur-Landau, Jennie R. Ebeling and Laura B. Mazow (Leiden: Brill, 2011): 255–74; Matthew J. Suriano, “Wine Shipments to Samaria from Royal Vineyards,” *Tel Aviv* 43 (2016): 99–110; on the archaeological con-

ble documents from the period after the Assyrian conquest of the capital city does not indicate a break in the production of oil and wine in the area. We can only assume that the Assyrian administration found other ways of recording these deliveries.

Epigraphic evidence indicates that the exiled Israelites were carried away to till the fields in Assyria, and that some of them were incorporated into the Assyrian army.⁴⁰ According to the documents, at least a part of these exiles lived in restricted freedom. Some were accepted as witnesses in various contracts. Information about their religion is absent except for the fact that many of them had names with a Yahwistic-theophoric element.⁴¹ Neo-Assyrian inscriptions found in the territory of the former Northern Kingdom – fragmentary and rare as they are – indicate that the ‘newcomers’, i.e. those exiled from Neo-Babylonian territories who were conquered by the Assyrians, had mingled with the local population.⁴²

Royal inscriptions reporting the Assyrian conquest of Samaria supply restricted and biased information on the past. This does not imply that they are of no value for the historian. They should, however, be taken for what they are: expressions of a royal discourse larded with some details that could be correct.⁴³

5.5 Hebrew Bible

I will not discuss or summarize the debate on the value of the Hebrew Bible for the reconstruction of the past. The interested reader is referred to the very infor-

text of the find of the ostraca see Ron E. Tappy, *The Archaeology of the Ostraca House at Israelite Samaria: Epigraphic Discoveries in Complicated Contexts* (Boston MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2016).

⁴⁰ See Ran Zadok, “Israelites and Judaeans in the Neo-Assyrian Documentation (732–602 BCE): An Overview of the Sources and a Socio-Historical Assessment,” *BASOR* 374 (2015), 159–89 and Radner’s chapter in this volume.

⁴¹ For a survey see Becking, *The Fall of Samaria*, 61–93; with Zadok, “Israelites and Judaeans” and Josette Elayi, *Sargon II, King of Assyria* (Atlanta GA: SBL Press, 2017), 50–51.

⁴² See Becking, *The Fall of Samaria*, 94–118; see also Karel van der Toorn, “Cuneiform Documents from Syria-Palestine. Texts, Scribes, and Schools,” *ZDPV* 116 (2000): 97–113; Wayne Horowitz, Takayoshi Oshima and Seth Sanders, “A Bibliographical List of Cuneiform Inscriptions from Canaan, Palestine/Philistia, and the Land of Israel,” *JAOS* 122 (2002): 753–66.

⁴³ The inscriptions are discussed in Becking, *The Fall of Samaria*, 21–45. On Sargon II see now also Sarah C. Melville, *The Campaigns of Sargon II, King of Assyria, 721–705 BC* (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 21–55 and Elayi, *Sargon II*.

mative book by Brad Kelle and Megan Bishop Moore.⁴⁴ As for the reports in the Hebrew Bible on the last days of the Kingdom of Israel, scholars hold different positions on the provenance of these textual units and their date of composition. I will not try to summarize that discussion or argue for a specific position.⁴⁵ These textual units can be read in two ways.

Firstly, reading the texts from a factual perspective, it is clear that 2Kgs 17:1–6 and 18:9–11 offer a set of propositions about the event:

1. Hoshea, the last king of the Northern Kingdom, rebelled against his Assyrian overlord.
2. Hoshea unavailingly looked for support in Egypt.
3. Shalmaneser (V), king of Assyria, conquered the city of Samaria.
4. Inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom were carried away in exile to a set of localities controlled by the Assyrian Empire.

These propositions can be rephrased as hypotheses about the past. It is, however, impossible to verify their implied claims. In case it turns out that they are all correct, it should be noted that they can only be interpreted as supplying a skeleton, without flesh, of the events. They only supply surface information on the course of events. The impact of the event on the life of (ordinary) people is not narrated.

Secondly, the Book of Kings offers a view on the reasons for the Assyrian conquest from a perspective comparable to that of the *longue durée*, but quite different from the *Annales*-perspective. The religious ideology of authors presents the fall of Samaria as the result of divine wrath triggered by the illicit conduct of the kings and inhabitants of Israel.⁴⁶ This explanation will not convince the modern, post-modern, or post-post-modern historian. It indicates, however, that the Biblical writers did look at the event from a broader perspective.

⁴⁴ Megan Bishop Moore and Brad E. Kelle, *Biblical History and Israel's Past: The Changing Study of the Bible and History* (Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2011).

⁴⁵ See Younger, "The Fall of Samaria," 477–79, the various commentaries on the Book of Kings, and the chapters by Levin, McKenzie and Tekoniemi in this volume.

⁴⁶ See my analysis of 2Kgs 17:7–20 and 21–23 in Bob Becking, *From David to Gedaliah: the Book of Kings as Story and History* (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag & Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2007), 88–122.

6 The Two-Conquests Theory

Previously, I have defended the “two-conquests theory”.⁴⁷ This idea was first formulated by Hugo Winckler⁴⁸ and later elaborated by Hayim Tadmor.⁴⁹ This theory reconciles the claims by two Assyrian kings to have conquered Samaria. Both Shalmaneser V and Sargon II are described as conqueror of the capital of the Kingdom of Israel. In the Babylonian Chronicle it is said that Shalmaneser “destroyed Samaria” (^{ur}šā-ma-ra-’-in iḥ-te-pi).⁵⁰ In the royal inscriptions narrating the deeds of Sargon II, this king is presented as the one who “besieged and conquered Samerina” (^{ur}sa-me-ri-na al-me ak-šud) over half a dozen times.⁵¹ In my opinion, the chronological riddle can best be solved by assuming a twofold Assyrian take-over: firstly by Shalmaneser V, and after the premature death of this king, by his successor Sargon II.⁵²

The re-reading of the archaeological evidence, however, prompts me to rephrase the theory. The relatively scarce evidence for demolition both in Samaria and in the countryside urges one to rethink the character of the language in the Assyrian inscriptions. With Ron Tappy, I am now convinced that the tough language in these inscriptions is primarily hyperbolic.⁵³ The martial expression of conquest and demolition functioned to impress the audience at home in Assyria.

⁴⁷ Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 21–45.

⁴⁸ Hugo Winckler, *Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen* (Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1892), 15–20.

⁴⁹ Hayim Tadmor, “The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: a Chronological-Historical Study,” *JCS* 12 (1958): 22–40, 77–100. Tadmor does not refer to Winckler, however.

⁵⁰ Babylonian Chronicle I i 28; see A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley NY: Augustin, 1975), 69–87; Tadmor, “Campaigns of Sargon II,” 39; Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 22–25; Younger, “The Fall of Samaria,” 464–8; Peter Dubovský, “Did Shalmaneser V Conquer the City of Samaria? An Investigation into the *ma/ba*-sign in Chronicle 1,” *Or* 80 (2011): 423–38; Ariel M. Bagg, *Die Assyrier und das Westland: Studien zur historischen Geographie und Herrschaftspraxis in der Levante im 1. Jt. v.u.Z.* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 227–28; Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 171; Elayi, *Sargon II*, 46–47.

⁵¹ Thus the Khorsabad Display Inscription, i 23. In other texts, the wording differs but always has a military flavour.

⁵² This view is accepted by a majority of scholars; see, e.g., Nadav Na’aman, “The Historical Background to the Conquest of Samaria (720 BC),” *Bib* (1990): 206–25; Tappy, *Archaeology of Israelite Samaria, Volume II*, 558–75; Younger, “The Fall of Samaria”; Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 192; Elayi, *Sargon II*, 48–50. M. Christine Tetley, “The Date of Samaria’s Fall as a Reason for Rejecting the Hypothesis of Two Conquests,” *CBQ* 64 (2002): 59–77; Sung Jin Park, “A New Historical Reconstruction of the Fall of Samaria,” *Bib* 93 (2012): 98–106, unconvincingly argued against this view taking their starting point in the Biblical narrative; see Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 242.

⁵³ Tappy, “The Final Years of Israelite Samaria.”

These sources are not reliable descriptions of the event(s). Although I do not think that the Assyrian takeover of Samaria was a completely peaceful action, I am of the opinion that the aim of the Assyrians was to gain control over the area with as little damage to it as possible in order to be able to gather as much in taxes as possible – in the form of food products – and to secure their trade interests along the *via maris*.⁵⁴ The character of this control can best be labelled with a term from colonial studies: “dominance without hegemony”.⁵⁵ The Assyrians dominated the trade and were the receivers of the agricultural surplus, but their power structure did not influence the area in its remoter parts.

7 Event and Waves of History: *histoire conjuncturelle*

Archaeology and climate studies are of great importance for the construction of processes of *longue durée* in an area. The picture that emerges from this type of analysis is that of Ancient⁵⁶ Israel as an agricultural society that slowly developed from a loosely connected network of self-supplying communities into a more closely knit network in which trade and surplus production became increasingly important to supply the needs of court, temple, and later, the foreign suzerain.⁵⁷

At the level of the *histoire conjuncturelle* it must be noted that Samaria fell prey to the Neo-Assyrian expansion. This expansion had its own internal mechanism and almost inevitable necessity. The will to govern over regions beyond the border of the Assyrian homeland necessitated building a strong army. The Assyrian armed forces and their campaigns needed to be financed. This financial pressure, in combination with the growing need for luxury in and around the court (including food to feed the otherwise unproductive court officials), was basic to the Neo-Assyrian system of raising tribute from conquered areas.⁵⁸ Avra-

⁵⁴ See Younger, “The Fall of Samaria,” 481.

⁵⁵ See Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Bagg, *Die Assyrer und das Westland*, 301–308.

⁵⁶ Or ‘Ancient’ Israel; Iron Age Israel; Palestine; Southern Levant.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Paula McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Jürgen Bär, *Der assyrische Tribut und seine Darstellung: eine Untersuchung zur imperialen Ideologie im neuassyrischen Reich* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996); Karen Radner, “Abgaben an den König von Assyrien aus dem In- und Ausland,” in *Geschenke und Steuern, Zölle und Tribute: Antike Abgabenformen in Anspruch und Wirklichkeit*, ed. Hilmar

ham Faust has elaborated this view by analysing the Assyrian demand for olive oil to be supplied from the Ekron area.⁵⁹ Supported by an incomparably strong military technology⁶⁰ this fly-wheel raged through the world of the Iron Age II period. When this almost unstoppable military machine reached the territory of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, it was only a matter of time till conquest of Samaria took place. I will not argue that the Assyrian take-over of Samaria was an inevitable fact that had to take place. History is too much an open process for such a claim.⁶¹ In hindsight, however, the end of the Kingdom of Israel seems an appropriate outcome of the political-military game of those days. It is only against the background of this *histoire conjuncturelle* that the Biblical report on this event makes sense.

In sum and by way of re-enactment:

1. Event: The inhabitants of the city of Samaria had to bow to the military superiority of the Assyrians. The death of Shalmaneser V and subsequent diplomatic intrigue only led to the delay of the seemingly inevitable. After the struggle, parts of the population were deported and new settlers came in.
2. Wave: The military conquest might not have been inevitable, but in view of the machinery of Assyrian expansion politics, this was an understandable outcome.
3. *Longue durée*: The area maintained its agricultural function. Food production was the basis of its economy. The agricultural surplus now had to be given to foreigners who ruled the area, although they were far away.

Klinkott, Sabine Kubisch and Renate Müller-Wollermann (Leiden: Brill, 2007): 213–30; Peter R. Bedford, “The Assyrian Empire,” in *The Dynamics of Ancient Empires: State Power from Assyria to Byzantium*, ed. Ian Morris and Walter Scheidel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 30–65.

⁵⁹ Avraham Faust, “The Interests of the Assyrian Empire in the West: Olive Oil Production as a Test-Case,” *JESHO* 54 (2011): 62–86.

⁶⁰ See e.g. Walter Mayer, *Politik und Kriegskunst der Assyrier* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995).

⁶¹ There are no such things as ‘laws of history’ which make events inevitable and necessary and by which the outcome of a process can be calculated; *pace* Graeme D. Snooks, *The Laws of History* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002).

Part II: Approaching the Fall of Samaria from Contemporary Assyrian and Egyptian Sources

Jamie Novotny

Contextualizing the Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel: What Can Assyrian Official Inscriptions Tell Us?

1 Introduction

Considerable scholarly effort has been made trying to lift the heavy veil shrouding the details of the history of the final two decades of the kingdom of Israel, including the identity of the Assyrian ruler who conquered its capital Samaria and captured its last king Hoshea. Because there are significant discrepancies in extant primary sources, in particular between the Old Testament and Assyrian inscriptions, scholars have yet to satisfactorily answer the most important questions about this crucial period in the history of the Levant. Assyrian sources, especially royal inscriptions, may provide some key pieces to the puzzle, but what can they tell us about the last twenty to thirty years of the kingdom of Israel, the fall of Samaria, and the fate of Hoshea?¹ This paper will examine the available inscriptions of the eighth- and seventh-century Assyrian kings in order to eluci-

Support for my research on Assyrian (and Babylonian) inscriptions is provided by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (through the establishment of the Alexander von Humboldt Professorship for Ancient History of the Near and Middle East) and Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (Historisches Seminar – Abteilung Alte Geschichte). I would like to thank Karen Radner for reading through and commenting on a draft of this manuscript. Her time and care are greatly appreciated. Any errors or omissions are solely my responsibility. Because this conference volume contains numerous topic-specific studies on the last days of Israel and because this chapter is to serve as an introduction to Part I of the proceedings, footnotes and bibliography are kept to a minimum. For the Assyrian material, see the chapters by Eckart Frahm and Karen Radner. All dates are BC(E), except, of course, in bibliographical references.

1 For (general) studies on royal inscriptions, see in particular Albert Kirk Grayson, “Assyria and Babylonia,” *Or NS* 49 (1980): 140–93; Johannes Renger “Königsinschriften. B. Akkadisch,” in *RIA*, vol. 6/1–2, ed. Dietz Otto Edzard (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 65–77 (especially 71–77); Hayim Tadmor, “Propaganda, Literature, Historiography: Cracking the Code of the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions,” *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project*, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 325–38; and Frederick Mario Fales, “Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: Newer Horizons,” *SAAB* 13 (1999–2001): 115–44.

date what information that genre of Akkadian text can and cannot provide with regard to the history of Israel. Special attention will be given to potential lost sources to determine if new Assyrian texts could really help scholars solve some of the mysteries of the Bible.

This paper will serve as a general introduction to the more topic-specific papers given in Part I of this book. Nevertheless, I do hope to say a few things not covered in the other chapters. As a word of warning, at least one section of this paper will be purely speculative. However, these conjectures will be deeply rooted in the extant source material of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II.

2 Background Information: What Do We Know about Shalmaneser V?²

Before diving into the heart of matters, let me introduce Shalmaneser V, the chief protagonist of our story according to a Babylonian chronicle, the Bible, and the classical historian Josephus.

From Babylonian King List A, the Ptolemaic Canon, and several Neo-Assyrian letters, we know that the man who would be the fifth Assyrian king with the name Shalmaneser also went by the name Ulūlāyu, his nickname or birth name.³

² For details on Shalmaneser V/Ulūlāyu, see Albert Kirk Grayson, “Assyria: Tiglath-pileser III to Sargon II (744–705 B.C.),” in *The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.*, The Cambridge Ancient History 3/2, second edition, ed. John Boardman et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 85–86; Heather D. Baker, “Salmānu-ašārēd,” in *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, vol. 3/I, ed. Heather D. Baker (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 1077 no. 5; Heather D. Baker, “Salmaneser V.,” in *RIA*, vol. 11/7–8, ed. Michael P. Streck (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 585–87; Karen Radner, “Ulūlāiu,” in *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, vol. 3/II, ed. Heather D. Baker (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2011), 1375 no. 3; Hayim Tadmor and Shigeo Yamada, *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 14; Karen Radner, “Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria (726–722 BC),” in *Assyrian Empire Builders* (London: University College London, 2012), <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/essentials/kings/shalmaneserv/> (accessed 10/2017); and Keiko Yamada and Shigeo Yamada, “Shalmaneser V and His Era, Revisited,” in *‘Now It Happened in Those Days’: Studies in Biblical, Assyrian, and Other Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Mordechai Cogan on His 75th Birthday*, eds. Amitai Baruchi-Unna, Tova Forti, Shmuel Ahituv, Israel Eph’al and Jeffrey H. Tigay (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017): 387–442.

³ For the relevant sections of Babylonian King List A and the Ptolemaic Canon, see Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 15–16. For details on these texts, see Jamie Novotny, “Babylonian King List A (BM 033332; Rm 3, 005),” in *The Royal Inscriptions of Babylonia online* (Munich: