Writing, Literacy, and Textual Transmission: The Production of Literary Documents in Iron Age Judah and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible

by

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Near Eastern Studies)
in the University of Michigan
2008**

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To my husband, Rob; my daughter, Bronwyn; and my grandmother, Ruby

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1

Literacy, Tradition, and the Pre-Modern State: Shifts in the Terms of Debate and the Resultant Implications for the Study of Writing and Literacy in Iron Age Judah

A story in the September 27, 2005, issue of *The Jerusalem Post* announced the discovery of a tiny seal impression (or bulla) bearing at least three Hebrew letters. The seal was found amidst piles of rubble from Jerusalem's Temple Mount and was dated by Bar-Ilan University archaeologist G. Barkay to the Iron II period (ca. 925-550 BCE). The furor over this find illustrates the extraordinary interest in unearthing inscriptions, the products of writing, from archaeological contexts dating to the Iron period (ca. 1200-550 BCE) in Israel.[1] The academic community in particular has expressed this intense interest in recent years through the publication of a rash of books and articles on writing, literacy, and archives in ancient Judah. The focus on the Judean region coincides with the fact that it has long been thought of as the locus point for the composition of the earliest versions of several texts now preserved in the Hebrew bible (HB), such as the books of Deuteronomy through 2 Kings, and several of the prophets.

Indeed, the problem of identifying the time and context for the composition of the biblical texts lies at the heart of every study of writing, literacy, and archives in ancient Judah, particularly since it is no longer assumed that internal textual criteria alone are sufficient for the absolute dating of a text. Most scholars now see the correlation of archaeological and textual evidence as a necessary starting point in hypothesizing a date of composition. Unfortunately, the majority of scholars who take this useful methodological approach typically apply it forthwith to the examination of textual

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[1] This study accepts the chronology of the Iron Age as articulated by I. Finkelstein in a series of articles (with E. Piasetzky, 2006: 373-386; Finkelstein 1999: 35-52, especially pp. 36-39; 1996: 177-187). This chronology, known as the Low Chronology (or LC), subdivides the Iron Age into two main periods, Iron I and Iron II, and dates these periods to ca. 1200-925 BCE and ca. 925-586 BCE respectively. For a more detailed explanation of the Low Chronology, together with the more traditional Conventional (or High) Chronology, see Chapter 5: 273-275.

production in Iron Age Judah without questioning their assumption that the Iron Age served as a likely context for Judean literacy. This supposition is understandable given the long-held belief in biblical studies that the first versions of several Old Testament biblical texts should be attributed to this period, but it can no longer be assumed *a priori*, given several studies which call into doubt the existence of any significant Judean literacy during the Iron Age (as well as of the presence of institutions such as archives that could have supported sophisticated literary activity).[2]

Indeed, the Persian and particularly the subsequent Hellenistic periods (ca. 500-200 BCE) provide more ample evidence for scribal activity and for the existence of institutions such as archives, libraries, and schools than does the previous Iron Age. Furthermore, a recent study has clearly shown that prior to the Hellenistic period, neither the cultural nor the material conditions were amenable for the development of a book culture in the modern sense (i.e. the production of single works attributed to individual authors intended for a particular audience).[3] The case will be made in the following pages of research, however, that a relatively sophisticated degree of literacy (albeit one limited to certain sectors of society) can be demonstrated as a phenomenon in Judah as well as in other parts of the Levantine world (Israel/Samaria and the Transjordan) during the Iron Age, and that literate activity comparable in nature albeit dramatically smaller in scale to that of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt did indeed exist in certain pockets of society in the Levant from at least the Middle Bronze Age down through the Iron II period. While the practices of literary production in Judah were not those of a book culture, writing in Iron Age Judah can be demonstrated to have developed certain functions characteristic of literary style in the largely oral cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia[4] that nevertheless could eventuate in the production of a book-length text, or perhaps better a "stream of tradition" destined to undergo further studying and transmission within the context of scribal schools.[5]

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[2] See in particular P. Davies 1998: 74-88 and T. Thompson 1992: 353-366.

[3] See K. van der Toorn 2007, especially pp. 9-26.

[4] For a survey of the literary style in oral cultures, see van der Toorn 2007: 14-16. Among the functions characteristic of literary style in oral cultures are (1) an archival function, (2) the oral performance of texts, and (3) the compilation within a single work of heterogeneous materials such as rules and rituals, and hymns and prayers.

[5] The phrase "stream of tradition", coined by A. Leo Oppenheim in reference to the studying and transmitting in scribal schools of cuneiform literature in Mesopotamia, has lately been applied by K. van

Indeed, the following chapters will demonstrate that in the oral cultures of the ancient Near East, it is the small circles of scribal specialists who engage in writing for the production and preservation of written records. While the scribal culture that produced the canonical books of the HB only flourished later during the Second Temple period, there is nonetheless indisputable evidence dating to the previous Iron Age for the presence of professional scribes in Judah who were the educated men of their time,[6] just as their counterparts were in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

With the Iron Age established as a likely context for Judean literacy, the next two issues to arise in this investigation into the writing activity of Iron Age Judah and the degree of literacy possessed by its inhabitants are whether the conditions would have been right for allowing the creation, reproduction, and transmission of literary documents, some of which subsequently served as sources for the production of various biblical texts, and if so, at what point during the lengthy Iron period. Inquiries into these two issues inevitably lead to the question of what kinds of scribal communities in Judah would most likely have been involved in the process of textual transmission. The method of addressing these questions has been affected profoundly of late by paradigmatic shifts in the discourse on (1) literacy and the complex interplay of the oral and literate processes that lie behind the transmission of written traditions; on (2) the issue of whether the products of writing such as inscriptions can be equated with the contemporaneous textualization of a literary tradition; and on (3) the question of the use of writing in pre-modern states.

Shifts in the Discourse on Literacy

From around the mid-twentieth century, social and anthropological theorists began to identify the appearance of writing in a society as signaling a radical departure from previous (oral) modes of communication and cognition.[7] They theorized that

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der Toorn (2007) to the Hebrew Bible as "the collection of texts written, studied, and copied over the centuries by scribes in the Jewish centers of scholarship" (p. 26).

[6] This evidence is in the form of epigraphic data for the professional production of written texts, as well as the evidence from personal seals inscribed with the title *sōpēr*, 'scribe.' See the detailed study of this epigraphic data in Chapter 5.

[7] See for example J. Goody and I. Watt 1968: pp. 27-68; M. Parry 1971, especially Studies I: 266-324 and Studies II: 264-325; W. Ong 1982, especially pp. 16-29 and 78-116; D. Olson 1994: 45-64; J. Goody 2000, especially pp. 132-151.

literacy functions as an autonomous technology with clear consequences for culture and cognition, and that these consequences entail the textualization of a previously oral tradition. Their conclusions had a profound effect on studies of ancient cultures in the region of Israel (Samaria) and Judah: it was assumed that the advent of writing brought about the development of a so-called "literate mentality" that soon displaced the previous oral mentality of these cultures. With the arrival of the "literate mentality" supposedly came a whole slew of cognitive and practical advances: an elevated intellect and higher culture on the one hand, and on the other the emergence of a document-oriented society, entailing the extensive use of archives and libraries. The conditions, which included the presumed spread of writing to most sectors of society, therefore became right for the composition of a body of literature such as the biblical texts.[8] In the last several decades, however, a wide spectrum of ethnographic studies of literacy revealed that while the emergence of literacy could facilitate shifts in culture and cognition, literacy itself could by no means be treated as a monolithic skill with uniform and predictable effects in every culture. These critics concluded that literacy could not in fact be separated from the cultural-historical frameworks and cultural practices in which it is invariably embedded.[9]

In the field of biblical studies, recent work by scholars such as D. Carr (2005) and W. Schniedewind (2004), along with older books by J. Crenshaw (1998) and S. Niditch (1994), have offered comprehensive studies that address orality and writtenness in Iron Age Judah in light of developments in the fields of sociology and anthropology (touched on above). Published well over a decade ago, Niditch's book *Oral World and Written Word* was the first to offer a lengthy application of these new insights to the problem of the HB's composition. Her assumption, which has become something of a consensus in studies of writing and literacy in Judah, holds that there is no "Great Divide"; in other words, oral and literate elements exist side-by-side and form a "continuum" with writing playing an increasingly greater role in the transmission of the (formerly) oral tradition. Niditch further maintains that oral composition does not cease once writing comes to a

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[8] See, for example, the conclusions of A. Demsky 1985: pp. 349-353; A. Lemaire 1981; A. Millard 1985: pp. 301-312 and 1987: pp. 22-31.
[9] See, for example, the work of R. Finnegan 1988; B. Street 1984, especially pp. 49-56 and 62-63; 2000: pp. 17-29; R. Thomas 1992, especially pp. 1-14.

culture, and "the oral aesthetic continues to be manifest even in written works."[10] As this relates to the texts of the HB, it suggests that the appearance of the written biblical tradition did not sound the death knell of the oral tradition: in fact, an oral mentality is evident behind many of the texts of the HB. Her contribution therefore lies in crafting a more realistic portrait of literacy and illiteracy in ancient Judah that focuses on the uses made of writing rather than assumptions regarding the generalized effects of writing on a culture, and in recognizing the texts of the HB as indelibly shaped by oral as well as literate processes of transmission.

This study on writing and literacy in Judah takes as its starting point Niditch's notion of an "oral-literate continuum" in its exploration of how orality and textuality (as represented by the epigraphic record of ancient Judah) function together and reinforce each other in a variety of ways.[11] Nevertheless, it proposes a more nuanced treatment of the complex interplay of the oral and literate processes that are behind the transmission of a written tradition. This necessitates a modification of Niditch's model of literacy that appreciates, for example, that inscriptions whose contents and context convey an understanding of writing as numinous (i.e. possessing a power to tap into the divine realm, as well as the capability of transforming contexts into magical and/or spiritual sites) should not necessarily be equated with an oral, pre-literate mentality (indeed, such an understanding of writing can also be found in thoroughly literate communities).[12] By assuming that the presence of characteristics thought of as oral in a text or inscription always means that the text in question derived from a largely oral mentality, Niditch can be seen to perpetuate the "Great Divide" she so deplores.

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[10] S. Niditch 1996: 44.

[11] The complexity of the relationship between orality and textuality in the HB has likewise been appreciated in the book-length study of D. Carr (2005) as well as in an essay by J. Schaper (2005) on the references to writing in the HB. Carr offers a new model for the production, revision, and reception of the biblical texts which sees them primarily as educational texts to be mastered by elite members of Judean society through a process of reading, writing, reciting, and even singing. According to Carr, therefore, in ancient Judah the written text represented only one facet of a literate process of "indoctrination/education/enculturation" in which memory and oral performance played equally important roles in the transmission of tradition. J. Schaper has observed that Niditch's assessment of certain passages (in Deuteronomy and Ezekiel) as falling along "the literate end of the scale" fails to grasp the complexity of the relationship between the literate and oral mentality behind the texts in question. Schaper points out that many passages actually make use of writing as a springboard "for memorizing, reciting, meditating, and teaching" – what he terms a process of re-transforming the written word into the oral.

[12] Cf. Schaper 2005: 332.

This study maintains that the characteristics of inscriptions identified by Niditch as markers of an oral mentality, such as the symbolic, iconic, and numinous use of writing, should not be assigned instantly to a non-scribal sphere of writing activity without some analysis of the context in which an inscription is found. Niditch's labeling of what she terms "short texts" as embodiments of an oral mentality,[13] together with her failure to examine the types of communities that might have rendered those inscriptions, all too easily places them at the far end of the oral side of the scale and attributes them to a near-illiterate mentality.[14] This study will suggest that within the context of the southern Levantine world, the material on which an inscription is found (e.g., the silver medium of the Ketef Hinnom amuletic texts; the plastered wall surface in the case of the Deir ʿAlla inscription) and the location in which a text is found (e.g., tombs, cultic sites) are highly suggestive of elite, even scribal activity.

Shifts in the Discourse on Transmitted Tradition

The notion prevalent in older studies of writing and literacy about a great oral/literate divide, as described above, perpetuated the tendency in the field of Syro-Palestinian archaeology to equate the products of writing activity (i.e. inscriptions) with the contemporaneous textualization of a literary (read: biblical) tradition. This tendency still persists, although it has in recent years been challenged by a shift in understanding the relationship between transmitted written tradition as it appears now in the HB, and its original written expression or inscriptional antecedents as exhibited by the epigraphic record of ancient Judah and Israel.

First, it is argued that the presence of written products in the epigraphic record for any given period of Judah's history, even if those products resemble or foreshadow a genre found later in the HB, cannot in-and-of-itself prove that an early version of a book such as the book (i.e. scroll) of *Kings* was composed during that period. Even in the event that the epigraphic record for Iron Age Judah suggests the possible existence of archival records such as those hypothetically used in the composition of *Kings*, one

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[13] Among her two most prominent examples of "short texts" betraying an almost completely oral mentality are the dedications and blessings found on storage jars at Kuntillet ʿAjrud in the northern Sinai, and the confessional statements featured in the silver scrolls unearthed in a burial cave at Ketef Hinnom (Jerusalem).
[14] See in particular her conclusion to Chapter 3, pp. 58-59.

cannot extrapolate the initial composition of an entire biblical book from such a circumstance. Furthermore, the original *Sitz im Leben* of these texts does not necessarily determine their present *Sitz im Korpus*, i.e., how they were re-used in the biblical text in which they now appear. The reconstruction of those original sources or texts is further complicated by the fact, as observed by J. Kofoed in his study of ancient Israelite historiography, that the re-use of a certain tradition very likely impacted its content.[15]

Given the above, one must be careful not to project the existence of a literary corpus of texts from the sheer fact of an up-tick in writing activity, as some have done for late Iron II (late eighth through early sixth centuries) Judah. One must also guard against over-hastily drawing direct connections between writing conventions extant in the epigraphic corpus (such as in the so-called priestly blessing on the Ketef Hinnom silver scrolls) and the new function that such conventions may have assumed when (and if) they were later re-used in a new literary creation (such as the biblical book of *Numbers*) for "political, religious, didactic, or other purposes."[16] The cautions expressed above will temper the conclusions reached in this project regarding the possibility that certain types of texts were being created and transmitted in Judah at some point in the Iron period.

Shifts in the Discourse on the Nature of the Pre-Modern State

The composition of several texts in the HB has long been linked by scholars to the establishment of the first states in ancient Israel and Judah, either the so-called "United Monarchy" of the tenth century BCE, or the "kingdom" of Judah later in the Iron period. Lately, however, shifts in the conceptualization of pre-modern states – particularly those states which sprang up on the periphery of what are generally considered the "early" states, Egypt and Mesopotamia – and in how these states manifest themselves in their respective archaeological and epigraphic records have led researchers to question this assumed connection between "state" and "scripture," at least in so far as the tenth-century period is concerned. In the field of Syro-Palestinian history and archaeology, it is I. Finkelstein's critique of the presumed archaeological correlates of the biblical "United Monarchy" that first raised the question of what is meant by the term "state." In a series

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[15] J. Kofoed 2005: 99-109.
[16] *Ibid*, 107.

of publications, Finkelstein has repeatedly asserted that there is no tenth-century period archaeological evidence for the existence of a centralized state.[17] His conclusions have undermined the traditional attribution of such biblical texts as *Samuel* and the *Psalms* to the tenth century, as it is difficult to imagine the composition of such texts without the presence of state-sponsored institutions.

Recent scholarship on the matter has likewise begun criticizing the application of terms such as "kingdom" or "state" to entities like Israel, Judah, Moab, and Ammon, as such terms imply a fully realized polity with well-defined political borders in which the use of writing represents one of a list of diagnostic traits identifying the entity as a state (along with other traits such as specialized administrative apparatuses, public rituals, etc.). The most current studies by A. Joffe and B. Routledge have shown that these terms gloss over the nature of the Iron Age Levantine polities because they are based on modern notions of a state as a fully unified and coherent agency or "thing."[18] Instead, the Levantine "state" should be understood as a historic effect of specific human practices (such as administrative practices, the use of military force, the creation of public rituals) that are brought together to give the polity both a name and an identity in time and space.

Both Joffe and Routledge have attempted to capture the distinction between modern notions of the "state" and the ancient political reality of the southern Levantine experience through the application of terms such "secondary states" and "ethnic states" to these polities, with the caveat that these terms still do not convey effectively the emergence of these states as an ongoing process (rather than a finished product) in that they imply that the Levantine polities simply re-organized themselves into a new form of the state once a specific set of conditions prevailed.[19] In other words, these terms imply

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[17] See, for example, Finkelstein 1996: pp. 177-187 and 1998: pp. 167-174.

[18] Cf. A. Joffe 2002: pp. 425-467 and B. Routledge 2004.

[19] To paraphrase Routledge, the concept of a secondary state envisions the formation of certain states as adaptive responses to the territorial or economic encroachment of pre-existent states; in other words, societies on the periphery of these pre-existent states re-organize themselves into states in reaction to the competitive environment engendered by the expansions of the pre-existent states. If one views states not as "things" but as "the emergent effects of specific human practices" (p. 7), however, then it is not possible to see these societies as simply waiting for a specific set of conditions to prevail in order for them to re-organize themselves into the new form of the state. The problem instead becomes one of explaining how "divergent practices come to be channeled along complementary pathways so as to give the state its paradoxical existence as a named agency with no body" (p. 8).

that the existence of the state – its unity and coherence (or "thingness") – was a prior, underlying condition rather than the effect of a particular set of discourses and practices.

The terms "secondary state" and "ethnic (or better, ethnicizing) state" are nonetheless useful, in that they allow one to distinguish between the formation of the small-scale polities of Israel, Judah, Moab, and Ammon on the one hand, and that of the early states such as Egypt and Mesopotamia on the other. The process of state formation that characterized these small Levantine polities centered on the creation of "new social identities, novel ethnic categories and boundaries"[20] rather than on the formulation of new bureaucratic methods. Such methods had already been provided for them by the innovations of the pre-existent states.

An entity like Iron Age Judah, therefore, must be understood as a *process* of state formation with fluid cultural and linguistic boundaries in which writing activity represents an intellectual product that typically helps articulate along with other cultural products the assertion of state hegemony. This is not to imply that writing's use was completely circumscribed by this one purpose in the Iron Age southern Levantine context; rather, it is argued that the reining in of the "field of writing" to further the articulation of state hegemony was the initial impetus that gave rise to writing's re-emergence in the Iron Age.[21] This circumstance quickly led to the adaptation of writing to other types of social and economic activity that were not necessarily so closely linked with a state aegis. In the chapters that follow, the shift in the conceptions regarding the pre-modern state in the Levant means that the use of writing and the shape of literacy in ancient Judah, as one of these secondary "ethnicizing" states, has to be understood within the context of the formation of the Levantine states in general, as well as the Judean state in particular.

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[20] Joffe 2002: 425.

[21] The notion of a "field of writing" presented above follows Routledge's adaptation of P. Bourdieu's concept of social "fields" to writing in the Iron Age (see Routledge 2004: 187-190; cf. Bourdieu 1977: 183-197). Routledge (2004) has argued effectively that writing's role in the Iron Age is illuminated if it can be considered, rather than simply a tool for managing information, instead as a "specific social practice constituted by interrelated sites, embodied skills, and culturally transmitted information" (p. 187). For further discussion of this concept and its application to writing activity in the Iron Age southern Levantine context, see Chapter 4 of this project (pp. 188-191).

Plan of the Project

This project builds upon the insights gained from all three of these shifts in discourse regarding literacy and its relationship with orality, transmitted tradition, and the pre-modern state to offer a more nuanced approach to the study of writing and literacy in ancient Judah than has heretofore been presented, with the ultimate goal of determining what the epigraphic data from Iron Age Judah permits us to say about the formation of a written literary tradition and about the most likely participants in that process. Such a study necessitates a close analysis of the archaeological and epigraphic record from Judah itself and from the surrounding regions, both in Judah's immediate vicinity as well as outside the Levantine region.

Although the two ancient cultures to the east and west of the Levant, Egypt and Mesopotamia, featured more sophisticated and complex bureaucracies and produced a more extensive number and variety of texts than did Judah, an examination of writing and literacy in those two cultures will aid this project in understanding the place and function of written texts in the ancient Near East (ANE). Investigations of literary production in Egypt and Mesopotamia can also help elucidate the scribal milieu and its modes of text production. In trying to reconstruct the world of the Judean (as well as Samarian and Transjordanian) scribes, the comparative data can therefore serve as a useful reference point.

Comparisons of the Judean case with the ancient Greek context of literacy and orality, although not as obviously relevant to the ancient Judean context, are nonetheless regarded as essential to the success of this project. This is because recent developments in the methodological approach to the epigraphic record of ancient Greece provide a helpful model for treating the inscriptional materials from Judah as well as from the rest of the Levantine region. The plan followed by this project, therefore, will be to situate developments in writing and state formation in Judah within a (narrowly) Levantine and (more broadly) ancient Near Eastern and Greek, rather than biblical, context.

This approach requires that the project begin (in Chapter 2) by examining the broader contemporary discussion that can be found in the fields of classical studies, Egyptology, and Mesopotamian studies regarding (1) the relationship between orality and literacy; (2) the particular role played by writing in state formation; and (3) the types of

literate individuals involved in the articulation of state hegemony and in the transmission of written texts. In consecutive chapters, the insights gleaned from these comparative studies will provide an appropriate ancient context for better understanding the developments that transpired in the southern Levant in general and ancient Judah in particular for a period spanning the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages down through the latter part of the Iron Age. Subsequent sections of the study, Chapters 3 and 4, seek to provide a chronological and geographic context for the discussion in Chapter 5 of literacy and writing Iron II Judah. Chapters 3 and 4 therefore focus closely on the archaeological and epigraphic evidence for writing and textual transmission in the Levant of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages and in the neighboring regions of Israel/Samaria and the Transjordan during the Iron II period.

Based on the investigation of the inscriptional data from Iron II Judah and the comparative evidence from the Levant, ANE, and ancient Greece, the final chapter (Chapter 6) proposes that written transmission of certain kinds of texts was taking place in Judah by the late Iron II period, while keeping in mind the cautions expressed above (pp. 6-7) regarding the overly facile equation of certain types of literate activity found in the epigraphic record with the actual creation of canonical texts. For example, the composition of a prophetic text in the neighboring region of central Jordan (the Deir ʻAlla plaster inscription) or the presence of a blessing text on the silver scrolls found in a Jerusalemite tomb (Ketef Hinnom) *cannot* be said to be equivalent to the texts which have gone through a process of selection and editing such as is found in the earliest manuscripts of the HB from the mid-second century BCE (Qumran).

Nevertheless, the comparative evidence from Egypt and Mesopotamia shows that the transmission of written texts did take place in the ANE context, and that these texts, while not conforming to our modern notions of a book, were produced in conformity with various modes and techniques of text production characteristic of oral cultures. The final chapter will therefore delineate the possible ways in which the extant inscriptional material witnesses to the production of literary traditions in Judah that eventuated in the later biblical texts and/or their written sources. Finally, the concluding chapter will offer suggestions regarding the kinds of communities that were likely involved in the creation

and reproduction of such texts, relying as always on the primary data from Judah as well as those from neighboring regions.

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Chapter 2

Literacy and Writing in Ancient Greece, Egypt, and Mesopotamia

Introduction

Before plunging into the scholarship regarding literacy in ancient Greece, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, it is pertinent to draw back momentarily from the brink and assess the broad contours of the treatments of literacy that have issued from researchers in the fields of classical studies, Egyptology, and Mesopotamian studies in the last several decades. Such an assessment quickly reveals that, in contrast to the discourse on literacy in ancient Judah and Greece, the equivalent discourse regarding ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian literacy has produced no comprehensive studies outlining the social location and extent of literacy for each period in the history of these two regions. It is therefore not inappropriate to wonder why this discourse on literacy assumes such a different shape to that of the scholarship on ancient Judah and Greece?

To be sure, the respective fields of Egyptology and Mesopotamian studies have not been completely bereft of discussions regarding literacy and writing. For Egypt, J. Baines and C. Eyre in the 1980s and early 1990s published a series of (sorely needed) articles broaching the topic, and recent years have seen a spate of essays dealing with specific aspects of literacy in particular periods of Egyptian history. The issue has been touched upon to a lesser degree in the study of Mesopotamian history and literature; one of the few scholars to take more than just a passing interest in Mesopotamian literacy is P. Michalowski, who frequently offered observations on the subject in a batch of essays published in the 1980s and 1990s. One of the most significant outcomes of the efforts made by these scholars is that their work signals the necessity of shedding light on an admittedly obscure and complex topic. Despite the challenges it affords (see more below), this subject is one which holds much promise for elucidating the particular shape and character of literacy and literate activities in these two ancient societies, as well as

the grades of difference that separated a literate from a semi-literate individual, or even a semi-literate from an illiterate individual.

The reasons why wide-ranging studies of literacy have not yet been attempted for Egypt and Mesopotamia are easily explained. The sheer scope of such an endeavor, while not rendering the task impossible, would make it quite daunting. Such a project would require an extensive amount of research and analysis, especially since the fields of Egyptology and Mesopotamian studies have left gigantic paper trails over hundreds of years of research and publication. Furthermore, the ancient communities of Judah and Greece have produced two bodies of literature whose date and authorship (along with just about everything else pertaining to them) have long been hotly contested – for Judah (together with Israel/Samaria), the texts of the Hebrew bible, and for Greece, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, attributed to the blind poet Homer.

The amount of controversy sparked by these texts is due in no small measure to their status as two of the major literary works of the West. Because of their prominence as members of the Western literary canon, the Hebrew bible as well as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have generated a particularly intense desire on the part of scholars and enthusiasts to identify the most likely context for their composition and production. In the past several decades, this desire has likewise spurred interest in investigating the social location as well as the degree of literacy that obtained in the regions of Judah and Greece, as speculation about date and authorship based largely upon the contents of the texts themselves has neither settled these issues nor cooled the flames of controversy. As a result, broad studies of literacy drawing on archaeological and comparative materials as well as on detailed textual analyses have been attempted for both regions.[22] In contrast, the lands that were once ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia have disgorged numerous texts, both literary and nonliterary; but none of these texts has inspired a comparative effort to attempt a comprehensive analysis of Egyptian or Mesopotamian literacy and literate activity.

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[22] The most noteworthy to date: for ancient Greece, *Ancient Literacy* (W.V. Harris, 1989) and *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (R. Thomas, 1992); for ancient Judah, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah* (D. Jamieson-Drake, 1991); *Oral World and Written Word* (S. Niditch, 1996); *How the Bible Became a Book* (W. Schniedewind, 2004); *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart* (D. Carr, 2005); and *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (K. van der Toorn, 2007).

Yet another explanation for the dearth of such studies is the tendency present in both fields to equate literate activity largely with the output of the professional class of scribes. This tendency is understandable, and in many cases necessary, particularly when the bulk of the data on literacy clearly emanates from the ranks of the scribal elite. Both Egyptian and Mesopotamian societies appear to have been highly stratified, with only a small percentage of the population, selected on the basis of birth and occasionally of merit, to be taught the skills of reading and writing, and perhaps even (later on in the educative process) of composition. Furthermore, the brilliance of the plentiful literary works springing from the rich literary traditions of both cultures and undeniably penned by a highly literate class of scribes has blinded many scholars to the desirability of examining other uses of writing and other types of literacy that may have been present in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

This penchant for dwelling on the literate elite and their output contrasts sharply with the tendencies often found in the study of writing and literacy in ancient Judah and Greece, where it is just as frequently assumed that literacy was more widely spread among the general populace and not restricted to a single class. Further assumptions that have long defined the outlines of Israelite and Greek literacy include the notion that the more democratic, or at least egalitarian, natures of these societies encouraged the founding of schools for many different social levels of the population. Whether exaggerated or simply erroneous, these assumptions, long adhered to in the study of ancient Judaean and Greek literacy, help to demonstrate why the scholarship on ancient writing and literacy has followed such a different path than it has in Egyptology and Mesopotamian studies.

These are potent reasons all for the relative neglect in analyzing different types of literate activity and different degrees of literacy across broad swathes of time in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, as well as for the extensive attention paid to the star power of the ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian literary world: the scribes and their output. Unfortunately, the impact of this neglect for students of literacy in these ancient cultures is that they themselves must piece together the vast and complex mosaic of literate activity across time from the considerable and varied array of articles and books on aspects of literacy published in the last several decades. For the topics of both Egyptian

and Mesopotamian literacy, what follows in the latter part of this chapter, therefore, will be a critique of the current discourse on literacy which pinpoints the primary characteristics of this discourse, identifies the current controversies agitating it, and summarizes any elements of consensus that may have been reached in recent years.

In the initial section of this chapter, tracing the development of the discourse on literacy in ancient Greece will follow a more chronological trajectory. This is rendered possible by the fact that the discussion on ancient Greek literacy and writing has followed a more-or-less clear pattern over the last fifty-odd years, in which the prevailing model of literacy (which saw Greece as the archetype for the transition from an oral to a literate society) has given way to a new model, focusing instead on the specific uses made of writing in ancient Greek culture, as well as on the complex interaction between the oral and written spheres of activity. This new model has in turn continued to be refined over the years, and the most current studies use it as a starting point for their analyses.

Writing and Literacy in Ancient Greece

Ancient Greek civilization has long served as a locus point for the debate over the universal meaning of literacy. For much of the twentieth century, western scholarship has tended to see in the history of the Greek city-states the site of a paradigmatic shift from an oral to a literate society. Until around fifty years ago, this shift was closely allied to the notion of a parallel development from a primitive to a civilized society in ancient Greece. While judgments about the relative sophistication of cultures have since largely been dismissed as unsustainable, the distinction between pre-literate and post-literate Greece continues to be maintained more or less rigorously in much of the discourse about ancient Greece. The proofs of this shift from an oral to a literate culture seem self-evident, as many of the developments in Greece appear to presuppose the advent of writing: the emergence for the first time of a democratic form of government in fifth-century Athens, the creation of scientific and logical discourses, and the explosion of literary texts, including the publication of the earliest histories.

The rich results of archaeological excavation in Greece and outlying areas have long served to confirm this vision; the sun-swept regions of Greece and Sicily have made plentiful offerings on the altars of epigraphic discovery. The total number of epigraphic

documents written in Greek (excluding ostraca and words on vases) and surviving from the eighth century BCE through the early seventh century CE exceeds 200,000.[23] A large proportion of these were unearthed in Athens and Attica (22,803 inscriptions).[24] No single other ancient Greek city-state of the period produced anything close to the quantity of inscriptions that Athens did. The possibility of drawing a connection between the Athenian practice of erecting public inscriptions and its democratic proclivities has been too tempting to resist for many, particularly in light of the explosion in the number of Greek inscriptions in the fifth century, when Athens' democratic system was first created.[25] A high level of literacy among Athenian citizens, so a common argument goes, must have been attendant upon this "epigraphic habit" of Athens and its democratic form of government.

The formulation of these positivistic theories about literacy in ancient Greece, and the tendency to elevate Greece as the poster-child for the development from an oral to a literate culture, received their impetus from the work done by M. Parry and his student A. Lord on traditional oral poetry in the 1930s and 1950s.[26] Based on their research on the contemporary illiterate bards of southern Yugoslavia, Parry and Lord concluded that Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were not composed by a single author but instead were the products of a tradition of oral poetry that stretched back, in some form, to the Mycenaean world. They strictly divided oral poetry from written poetry, arguing that the advent of writing destroyed the flexibility of oral poetry and the tradition of improvisation. Their conclusions about the composition process of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* led them to formulate a number of influential ideas about Greek civilization. Among these were the assumption that as an oral society, pre-literate Greece possessed specific characteristics that clearly distinguished it from a literate society, and the belief that with the advent of writing,

[23] J.K. Davies 2003: 326.
[24] C. Hedrick 1994: 160.
[25] From Athens and Attica there are approximately 1,500 inscriptions, most dating between the middle and end of the fifth century. These have been collected by D. Lewis in the third edition of *Inscriptiones Graecae*, Vol. 1 (1981).
[26] Parry and Lord gradually published the recorded performances of the South Slavic bards in the series *Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs* (from 1953 onward). Before this fieldwork in Yugoslavia was initiated, Parry first had presented his theory of the link between tradition and orality in Homer in a pair of important essays published in 1930 and 1932 under the joint title "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making" (reprinted in Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse. The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, 1971, Studies I: 266-324 and Studies II: 325-264).

Greek civilization quickly assumed the characteristics associated with a literate culture, including the respect for a fixed (written) text and the widespread use of writing for all kinds of purposes.

The conclusions reached by Parry and Lord about orality and literacy in ancient Greece (as well as about the composition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) continue to have a great impact on the study of these phenomena. Moreover, the publication of their study led to a rapid growth of interest in detailing the characteristics of literacy in ancient Greece. The decades following the first appearance of their study therefore saw the publication of a number of articles and books which all reached similar conclusions about Greek civilization and literacy as those described above. There was in particular among these studies a strong tendency to associate literacy with the supposed high point of Greek civilization—the classical period and the emergence of democracy in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE.[27]

The analysis of Greek civilization as the site of a paradigmatic shift from an oral society to a literate one was voiced most persuasively not by classicists however, but by two anthropologists, J. Goody and I. Watt, in a 1968 article which they wrote together.[28] From their examination of the development of writing in ancient Greece, Goody and Watt drew conclusions about the consequences of literacy which they believed were applicable universally. Regardless of the time and place in which literacy manifests itself, they argued, it will always reveal its intrinsic characteristics for society and for cognition. While scholars of ancient Greece prior to Goody and Watt had connected literacy with the dawn of democracy and western intellectual activities, Goody and Watt were the first to articulate a general theory about the universal meaning of literacy which rested upon an analysis of Greek civilization and in particular of the society of Athens.

Goody and Watt saw the first flowering of literacy in ancient Greece as the paradigmatic example of a shift from an oral to a literate culture. Earlier anthropologists had tended to see a "great divide" between traditional and modern ways of life as reflective of differences in human nature ("logical"/"pre-logical") or stages of civilization ("advanced"/"primitive"). Based on the ancient Greek example, Goody and Watt instead

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[27] Cf. F.D. Harvey 1966: 585-635, E. Havelock 1963, H. Immerwahr 1964: 17-48, and E.G. Turner 1952.
[28] Goody and Watt 1968: 27-68.

suggested that the root of these differences lay in the distinction between literate and non-literate societies.[29] All of the characteristics that emerged from the "great divide" resulted not from biological or natural characteristics of different peoples, but from the development of writing – a significant technological acquisition that Goody in later works termed a "technology of the intellect."[30]

According to Goody and Watt, the advent of writing and literacy had a profound effect not only on the nature of knowledge and cultural tradition, but also on the socio-political development of any given society, resulting in the growth of bureaucracy, of more complex and larger civilizations from simpler, smaller communities, of scientific thought and institutions, and in the growth of democratic political processes.[31] In Greece, alphabetic writing affected an "intellectual revolution" that led to the erosion of the prevailing orthodox cultural tradition, the beginning of history, religious and natural philosophy, and the rise of the democratic political system in Athens.[32]

In the distinction they drew between the (alphabetic) literacy of ancient Greece and the (non-alphabetic) literacy of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Hatti and China, Goody and Watt assumed an evolutionary development in writing that understood all writing systems as aspiring to represent speech, and which concluded that phonetic systems encouraged the spread of literacy whereas "incompletely phonetic systems were too clumsy and complicated to foster widespread literacy."[33] In addition to the division they saw between alphabetic and non-alphabetic literacy, Goody and Watt also identified a sharp division between the literate and oral attitude towards the world. The wide diffusion of writing assumed by Goody and Watt to have taken place in ancient Greece prompted the appearance of an attitude that was very different from that common to non-literate societies: it was a more conscious, comparative and critical attitude towards the world. This new attitude questioned the "many inconsistencies in the beliefs and categories of understanding handed down to them" in the previously oral cultural tradition.[34]

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[29] Goody and Watt 1968: 28, 67.
[30] *Ibid.* Cf. Goody (1999: 31) for his use of this term in particular.
[31] *Ibid*, 44-49, 55.
[32] *Ibid*, 43-45.
[33] *Ibid*, 35.
[34] *Ibid*, 48. In a series of articles and books, Goody has continued to suggest ways in which literacy has affected cultures, although he has now dropped his claim to study literacy's "consequences" in favor of investigating instead its "implications" (cf. Goody 1987: xvii; 1999: 29-33; 2000:8). Another prominent

The other major voice in the formulation of this model of literacy, E. Havelock, contributed much more directly and prolifically to the analysis of literacy in ancient Greece in a number of articles and books stretching from the early 1960s through the mid-1980s. Like Goody and Watt, Havelock identified ancient Greece as the place where this profound shift from oral culture to literate culture first happened. Throughout the decades, he remained remarkably consistent in his view that literacy, by affecting thought processes in specific ways, played a critical role in the intellectual and cultural development of Athens.[35] Yet Havelock also anticipated later studies of literacy in Greece by refusing to draw as sharp a line between the literate and non-literate cultures as did Goody and Watt. He maintained that Greek classical culture was not inaugurated by the invention of writing, but was already there when that invention took effect: "That culture began its career as a nonliterate one and continued in this condition for a considerable period after the invention."[36] Havelock therefore warned against viewing the non-literate culture of ancient Greece as a primitive one.

Because of his belief that the development from an oral to a literate culture in Greece took place gradually over time, Havelock argued for a much later date for the period when the Athenians became fully literate than many other scholars, placing this event in the last third of the fifth century. For the centuries prior to this era of widespread literacy but following after the advent of writing in classical Greece, he suggested different categories of more or less restricted literate activity. Havelock classified the condition of Greek society in the seventh and sixth centuries as one of craft-literacy, wherein "the alphabet written or read represents an expertise managed by a restricted group of the population."[37]

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anthropologist who has written on literacy, W. Ong, shares with Goody the same central argument (as summarized by J. Collins in his survey of anthropological approaches to the study of literacy): "writing is a technology that transforms human thinking, relationships to language, and relationships to and representation of tradition" (Collins 1995: 77-78). Ong, while contributing only indirectly to the discussion on ancient Greek literacy (see 1982: 16-29; 78-116), nonetheless has affected it through his insistence on the sharp differences between the thought processes of an oral and a literate mind, and through his elevation of the alphabet as the tool *par excellence* of the literate world (1982: 24, 78, 81-93; 1986: 23-50).

[35] See E. Havelock 1963; 1971; 1982; and 1986: 134-150.

[36] Havelock 1982: 186.

[37] *Ibid*, 188. The following period of the late sixth and early fifth centuries he characterized as one of "recitation literacy," when the use of writing began to spread but was still restricted. Not until the last third of the fifth century was the average Athenian taught letters, according to Havelock.

To support his theory, Havelock introduced a radical new way of interpreting ancient Greek inscriptions which continues to inform studies of Greek literacy today. He found that a number of the characteristics of these inscriptions seemed highly incongruous with the supposed literate society in which they were written. Havelock concluded that the character of many Greek inscriptions testifies to the largely oral context in which they were inscribed. They are metrical and appear to express sentiments which previously had been composed orally for memorization and recitation.[38] For other inscriptions, the visual rather than the phonetic values seem to be important to the inscriber; this is especially evident in those inscriptions which betray "a habit of manipulating the arrangement of letters for decorative purposes."[39] Havelock argued therefore for a much more fluid transition between the non-literate and literate Greek cultures, maintaining that the oral characteristics of ancient Greece continued long after the advent of writing.

As will be shown in more detail in the discussion below, subsequent classical scholars have expanded upon this point, as well as on Havelock's contention that widespread literacy did not occur in ancient Greece until the late fifth century. Conversely, his view of literacy as an autonomous force, which he shared with Goody and other classicists, has been sharply challenged in the last thirty or so years. Their model of literacy has been termed the "autonomous model" by their critics, as it assumes that literacy functions as an autonomous technology which has clear consequences for culture and cognition. Critics of this model have asserted that literacy in fact must *not* be separated from the cultural-historical frameworks and practices in which it is invariably embedded.[40]

Among these critics, W.V. Harris and R. Thomas have been the two most prominent in the field of classical studies.[41] Indeed, the publication of Harris' book on

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[38] *Ibid*, 190-191.

[39] *Ibid*, 191.

[40] Cf. in particular J. Collins 1995: 75-93; R. Finnegan 1988; D. Keller-Cohen 1994: 1-29, esp. 8-10; B. Street 1984.

[41] Until the works of these two classicists were published, the criticisms launched at the "autonomous" model of literacy in the general anthropological discourse were slow to trickle down to studies of ancient Greek literacy. See, for example, the assertions of widespread literacy in ancient Greece found in O. Murray 1980 (especially p. 96); P. Cartledge 1978: 28, 37; A. Burns 1981: 372. On the other hand, a handful of articles published in the 1980s had begun to cast doubt on the dominant paradigm, i.e. the view that the phenomenon of generalized social literacy in ancient Greece was an inevitable by-product of the

ancient literacy in 1989, as well as of Thomas' two books, the first on written and oral traditions in ancient Athens (1989), and the second more generally on literacy and orality in ancient Greece (1992), inaugurated a new model of ancient literacy.[42] In the formulation of their new model, these two classicists issued comprehensive, detailed, and effective challenges to what they saw as the "technological determinism" of the cognitive studies of Goody, Havelock and others.[43] Their abandonment of grandiose claims regarding literacy's (and in particular alphabetic literacy's) effect on cognition resulted from a marked shift in the nature of their methodological approach to ancient literacy. Both scholars chose to adopt a more comparative approach, drawing from the discourse on literacy in fields as diverse as anthropological ethnography and medieval archival history.[44]

Among the anthropologists contributing to the drive away from viewing literacy as a single autonomous force with predictable effects in a given society,[45] none has been as influential in the field of classical studies as R. Finnegan.[46] In a series of essays collected in one volume and published in 1988, Finnegan has offered the most meticulous

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adoption of the alphabetic script. See S. Flory 1980: 12-28; S. Stoddart and J. Whitley 1988: 761-772; Ø. Andersen 1989: 73-90; R. Pattison 1982: 45.

[42] Harris 1989 (cf. Harris 1990: 93-98); Thomas 1989; 1992.

[43] For Harris's critique of what he terms the "woolly and grandiose thoughts" of Havelock and Goody, see especially 1989: 40-42. For Thomas's criticism of Goody and Havelock's "optimistic" view of literacy, see especially 1989: 15-34 and 1992: 15-28.

[44] The very notion of using a comparative methodology to shed some light on the difficult issue of ancient literacy can be attributed to the way in which anthropologists like K. Gough, R. Finnegan, and B. Street have employed various ethnographic studies to point out the weaknesses of the generalizing model of literacy. In her study of literacy in ancient India and China (1968: 69-84), Gough provided an early critique of this model. She rejected the claim that alphabetic literacy is superior to other kinds of literacy, pointing to the cases of India and China, which possessed a similar scale of (non-alphabetic) literacy as that which was claimed for ancient Greece. Gough also demonstrated through her study of these ancient societies that literacy does not necessarily usher in skeptical and objective inquiry.

[45] Cf. G. Baumann 1986: 1-22; J. Collins 1995: 75-93; J.M. Foley 1997: 146-173; and D. Keller-Cohen 1994: 1-29.

[46] Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the anthropologist B. Street has also been a particularly vocal opponent of what he has termed the "autonomous" model of literacy (1984: 49-56, 62-63, 103-125; 1999: 34-40; 2000: 17-29). His fieldwork in Iranian villages during the 1970s led him to formulate a different model, one which he calls an "ideological" model because he envisages literacy as an essentially ideological and social practice continually constructed and informed by the social practices, institutions, and power structures in which it is embedded. According to Street, literacy's meaning and impact are never autonomous, but instead are always shaped by the socially imparted and controlled practices of reading and writing. Literacy therefore cannot be defined as one unified phenomenon with inherent characteristics, but rather must be examined as a highly variable social practice.

and nuanced rebuttal of the "autonomous" model of literacy.[47] It is her work, more than any other anthropologist's, which has influenced the approach of Thomas in particular. Finnegan warns against generalized technological determinism, arguing instead for recognition of the complexity and variation in the social uses of the technologies of communication. It is the failure to appreciate the social complexity of literacy that has led to claims of what she terms a "Great Divide" between the literate and the non-literate.

It is this tendency to view literacy and orality in binary opposition to each other which bears the full brunt of Finnegan's censure. A generalizing view, which assumes that literacy always brings a set of predictable consequences to individuals and societies, and that acquiring literacy constitutes a significant state of progress in human affairs,[48] has led to the denigration of oral forms, or orality, as only a developmental stage, left behind and "outdated" once written modes of expression come to the fore. The forms of oral expression which continue to exist alongside written forms are usually ignored in favor of searching back for orality's "pure" or "uncontaminated" forms; in this way, "written" and "oral" are commonly expressed as modes of communication in binary opposition to each other.

The essays collected in her book offer numerous ethnographic studies which demonstrate that there is a continuum rather than a divide between the two communication technologies of oral and written transmission. Many of the features attributed to a literate culture may, for example, be found in so-called oral cultures, and in most cultural contexts, oral and literate media actually mix and overlap. When writing is introduced to a culture, it "can be used for different purposes and with different philosophies in different societies: there is not just *one* context for writing or one established stage (evolutionary or otherwise) to which it corresponds."[49]

Based on her studies of the Limba people of Sierra Leone, Finnegan further concludes that literacy is not a precondition for abstract thought or for the production of

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[47] Finnegan's essays were originally published separately between 1969 and 1984, before being collected in one volume and published in 1988 under the title *Literacy and Orality. Studies in the Technology of Communication*.
[48] These claims are what she terms the "Mythical Charter" of literacy (1994: 31-46).
[49] 1988: 108 (italics hers).

literature.[50] She argues against the assumption that writing inevitably accompanies organized commerce and administration in all cultures, simply because it does so in our own Western culture.[51] In rejecting the view that envisages literacy as "the sufficient or necessary condition for some further state of affairs" in the history of human development, Finnegan urges that the relationship between literacy and human development be recognized as much more complex than such a view allows. One aspect of this complexity is the role literacy plays not as "an effective cause" but instead as "an enabling factor: something which *can* facilitate particular forms of cognitive development, etc., but does not of itself bring them about."[52] The complexity of this relationship also emerges once the focus is shifted *from* the technology of communication as itself a motive force and *onto* the uses to which that technology is or can be put. Finnegan therefore calls scholars to shift their attention away from "the search for universals, ideal types or human development in general terms" and instead re-focus on the *uses* of literacy and orality in order to partake in a "more detailed investigation into actual choices in specific societies."[53]

While the studies of Finnegan and other anthropologists have profoundly shaped the methodologies of Harris and of Thomas in particular, both of these researchers of ancient literacy have found recent studies in medieval archival history to be more directly relevant to their work. At first blush, the studies of ancient literacy and medieval literacy have little in common, but the medieval historian M.T. Clanchy[54] has provided Harris and Thomas with a comparative model for the way in which a society (Norman England, in Clanchy's study) makes the transition from depending on oral discourse and human memory as a way to preserve important information, to relying on written documentation. Several of Clanchy's major points about this transition have proven particularly relevant

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[50] Finnegan, however, does acknowledge the possibility of a "necessary connection" between literacy and the ability to conceptualize abstractly and argue rationally (1988: 151), although she does not elaborate on the nature or character of this connection. Instead, she downplays the possibility of a link between literate skills and abstraction by noting that her "own prejudices suggest that there is [a necessary connection]"; the fact that "this belief is built into [her] whole socialization and forms one rationale for [her] own career" leads her to doubt the existence of such a connection. Moreover, she notes that "rationality" is a "slippery and emotive set of concepts" whose definition is culture-specific (p. 153).

[51] *Ibid*, 148-149.

[52] *Ibid*, 159.

[53] *Ibid*, 161.

[54] M. Clanchy 1979; second edition, 1993.

to the case of ancient literacy: (1) that seemingly obvious ways to make use of documents and to store them for future reference as valuable tools in an administration are not actually self-evident;[55] (2) that oral methods for recalling and storing information are not immediately superseded by written methods: rather, the two methods overlap for a great length of time;[56] and (3) that the spread of documents does not necessarily signify widespread literacy.[57]

As if taking his cue from this last point of Clanchy's, Harris begins his book on ancient literacy by challenging the assumption of many classicists that the amount and variety of surviving documentation clearly indicates that the ability to read and write was common in the ancient world.[58] In order to show that this was not the case, Harris details the factors that made literacy difficult, and demonstrates how most of the necessary social factors needed to produce widespread literacy were not present in the ancient world. For example, the notion of encouraging the diffusion of literacy into the populace in general was never a serious political goal in either Greece or Rome.[59] Neither was there a system of schools established to spread basic literacy, contrary to the belief of earlier classicists.[60] In archaic Greece (ca. 750-480 BCE), Greek life and society certainly did develop, but for the most part they did so without the aid of writing, instead relying upon oral communication, as they had always done.[61]

Harris therefore radically revises downward the estimate of the rates of literacy, concluding that at most ten percent of the population of Greece and no more than fifteen percent of Romans were truly literate.[62] As for the identity of the literate individuals, Harris posits that in archaic Greece (ca. 750-480 BCE), "a solid minority … among the male citizens" possessed limited reading and writing skills, and that the rate of literacy in this group expanded during the classical period (ca. 480-320 BCE), but never exceeded

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[55] Clanchy 1993, especially pp. 32-35.

[56] *Ibid*, 172-184.

[57] *Ibid*, especially p. 294.

[58] Harris 1989. See especially Chapter 1, pp. 3-44.

[59] *Ibid*, 13.

[60] *Ibid*, 16-17. According to Harris, the school systems of the Graeco-Roman world were "quite puny," although during the Hellenistic period education was subsidized by the Greek cities for the first time. But no ancient state ever arrived at the point where mass literacy was considered "indispensable to the state's economic well-being" (p. 18).

[61] See in general Harris 1989: Chapter 2, pp. 45-64.

[62] For ancient Greece (Attica), see especially p. 259; for ancient Rome, see especially p. 267.

ten percent.[63] For both ancient Greece and Rome, he concludes that the only people who knew how to write were primarily members of the political and social elite, along with small numbers of their slaves, and a few exceptional women.[64]

Around the same period as the publication of Harris' study, another voice emerged as an important contributor to the dialogue about ancient literacy in Greece. Like Harris, Thomas criticizes the portrait of fifth- and fourth-century Greece as a "literate" society supposedly dependent on the written word, with a large percentage of its citizens fully literate. Yet in this volume and in another published a few years later, Thomas provides a much more detailed and nuanced series of studies on literacy and its interaction with orality in ancient Greece, and in particular in Athens. In the mold of anthropologist Finnegan, Thomas has encouraged a view of literacy which stops seeking its general effects and tries instead to understand the implications and effects of literacy as being determined by the habits and beliefs of the society in question. For Greece, therefore, she is concerned not with literacy rates but instead with the particular uses to which writing was put, how as a skill it developed and changed, and what kind of attitudes about writing existed.[65]

Thomas sets up both her studies of ancient Greek literacy by stressing four major points which show how heavily indebted she is to the work of Finnegan and Clanchy.[66] The substance of Thomas's first major point clearly hearkens back to the insights of Finnegan: she contends that the forms that literacy took in ancient Greece varied even within that society, and that its uses were determined by the varying beliefs, attitudes and organizations of Greek society.[67] Because literacy must not be treated as "a monolithic skill," Thomas stresses how vital it is therefore to define literacy, and to be cognizant of the fact that there are many different levels of literacy within a given society. She uses

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[63] *Ibid*, 59.

[64] For Greece, see in particular pp. 103-115. For Rome, see pp. 248-259. The views of Harris concerning ancient literacy – that it did not operate as an autonomous force in history, politics, economics, or rationality, and that mass literacy was never achieved in the ancient world – quickly became the consensus in classical scholarship. The consensus was affirmed by the publication in 1991 of a series of essays by different classical scholars on various aspects of literacy in the Roman empire (*Literacy in the Roman World*, edited by A.K. Bowman). The compilation also served as a forum for critiquing the finer details of Harris' lengthy study (see the essays by A.K. Bowman pp. 119-131; J.L. Franklin pp. 77-98; T. Cornell pp. 7-33; M. Beard pp. 35-58; and A.E. Hanson pp. 159-198).

[65] Thomas 1989: 1-14, especially 10, and 1992: 16-28, especially 26-28.

[66] 1992: 15-28.

[67] Cf. 1989: 29 and 1992: 9.

the term "phonetic literacy" to describe the type of literacy that most likely existed in ancient Greece: this was a literacy in which reading was generally not done silently, and in which texts "would often be read in order to be memorized."[68]

Thomas also observes that there were different degrees of literacy which at least partly reflect the need for writing in daily life,[69] and that reading and writing skills did not necessarily go hand-in-hand in ancient Greece: an individual could learn to read and not necessarily to write. Despite the fact that the evidence "is skewed towards those who could write" (since we possess archaeological evidence only for this skill), it is quite likely that in ancient Greece more people could read than could write. Throughout this discussion, Thomas stresses both the complexity of literacy and the paucity of detailed ancient evidence.

As for her second major point, Thomas, like Harris, is concerned with how oral traditions continue to exist alongside the emergence of written traditions, but she goes farther than Harris in advocating an approach in which literacy and orality are considered together as two interconnecting "communication techniques."[70] She does not see the value in distinguishing the literate areas from the oral ones within ancient Greek society, as this society was neither fully "literate" nor "oral." Echoing Finnegan, Thomas insists that "the presence of writing does not necessarily destroy all oral elements of a society, and orality does not preclude complex intellectual activity."[71]

As Thomas demonstrates, this point has particular consequences for how one views the process of recording in written form the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Since the work of Parry and Lord, this process had long been seen as ringing the death knell of the long tradition of oral poetry that inspired and shaped these works. By sharply opposing oral poetry to literate poetry, Parry and Lord not only perpetuated the assumption that the advent of literacy kills orality, but also the idea that an oral society possesses certain predictable characteristics that distinguish it clearly from a literate one. Thomas, however, argues against posing a sharp dichotomy between the composition processes of

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[68] 1992: 9.
[69] For example, Athenian potters whose craft required them to write the names of the figures they painted may have been highly literate, while women who did not take part in public life, as well as subsistence farmers who had no need for writing skills, were probably completely illiterate (1992: 9-10).
[70] See Thomas 1989: 1-14 and 1992: 1-14.
[71] 1992: 4.

oral and literate poetry. She maintains that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were certainly products of a long oral tradition of poetry, but that this tradition was one in which careful reflection, constant memorization, and composition in private played critical roles. These tactics, she concludes, were not just the preserve of the literate.[72] In response to the notion that writing killed oral poetry, as it "engendered a respect for a fixed (written) text that destroyed the flexibility of oral poetry and the tradition and necessity of improvisation,"[73] Thomas has voiced doubts about whether writing in ancient Greece was ever intended to "fix a text forever," especially since the notion of a "fixed, verbatim accuracy" is not easy to find even as late as the fifth and fourth centuries.[74]

Turning to the use of writing in Athens in particular, Thomas emphasizes the central paradox of the relationship between writing and orality in ancient Greece of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE: Athens appears to have been a "literate" society in that it left behind a large corpus of literature as well as various documents associated with the workings of the government in the city-state (such as administrative texts, inscriptions, and archives), yet most written documents were actually transmitted orally – whether recited aloud or sung – and the written word was not highly regarded by the fully literate (for example, within legal contexts a written document was not considered by itself as adequate proof until the second half of the fourth century BCE).[75] Greek society, including that of Athens, retained a profoundly oral character. In Athens, oral traditions relating to the community, to noble families, and to the cult conveyed most of what was known or thought about the past. The public, collective activities of Greek communities allowed oral discourse to flourish.[76]

Thomas' third major point affirms Harris' assertion that the "degree, extent, and significance of literacy" as well as of orality will shift over the centuries. But she pursues the implications of this observation much more profoundly than did Harris. In

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[72] *Ibid*, 29-51. Furthermore, the formulaic style so closely associated with oral poetry by Parry and Lord can also characterize written poetry, while some oral poetry reveals little in the way of formulae.
[73] *Ibid*, 45.
[74] *Ibid*, 48.
[75] Cf. her discussion in 1992: 3-4, and 1989: 2, 34-38. In this second point, Thomas shows herself to be indebted to the studies in medieval archival history of Clanchy. She even adopts from him the phrase "document-minded" to describe the Athens of the late fourth century, in contrast to the Athens of the sixth and fifth and early-mid fourth centuries (cf. p. 14).
[76] See Thomas 1989: Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 on the reception and transmission of oral traditions in archaic and classical Athens.

contradistinction to earlier classicists who assumed a rapid diversification of writing skills once writing had been re-introduced in ancient Greece, Thomas maintains that writing skills developed only slowly as "the use of writing was extended to new contexts and partly adapted according to older oral usages."[77] In her discussion of the function of writing in archaic and classical Greece, Thomas develops this point in more detail, demonstrating how writing was "grafted" onto earlier, non-literate, customs.

Throughout her analysis of writing's function in ancient Greece, and particularly in her emphasis on the "non-written background" of the archaic period (ca. 750-480 BCE), Thomas has built on the work of Havelock. Like Havelock, Thomas interprets ancient Greek inscriptions as reflections of the largely oral context in which they were inscribed.[78] As noted by Thomas, some of the earliest uses of writing were the recording of poetic tags, the marking or guarding of property, the labeling of offerings to the gods, and the marking of tombstones. In many of these cases, writing seemed to serve the spoken word; its rendering on stone and other materials "was meant to represent statements which were to be uttered aloud, usually in verse."[79] Yet early writing related to the spoken word or to the context or object to which it was added in a variety of ways. As property labels, it served to guard property symbolically, while on votive offerings, it offered people and things to the gods. On both marked tombstones and votive offerings, writing was "thought to ensure immortality through its permanence."[80]

Frequently, writing was "grafted onto older customs." For example, memorials to the dead existed before writing, but once writing was added in the form of an inscription it did not suddenly assume the entire weight of the communication of the memorial. According to Thomas, writing was merely a part of this commemoration, albeit a written, poetic part. It is in this sense that writing can be said to "exaggerate earlier customs" rather than superceding them.[81] Thomas concludes that:

> "…to a large extent archaic Greek writing does seem to be at
> the service of speech, repeating verse, enabling objects to 'speak' as if
> they were animate, preserving and reinforcing the pre-literate habits of

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[77] Ibid, 29.
[78] 1992: 52-73.
[79] *Ibid*, 62.
[80] *Ibid*.
[81] *Ibid*, 63.

the society, extending and deepening the customs of poetic and visual memorials."[82]

An important aspect of Thomas' argument is her insistence that historians need to explore the "neglected aspects of writing," i.e. those aspects which do not conform to the highly literate assumption that writing means only what the words mean. These neglected aspects she terms the "symbolic," "non-documentary," or "non-literate" uses of writing.[83] In her discussion of the "non-rational" use of writing,[84] Thomas notes that the evidence of graffiti (dedicatory inscriptions, abecedaria, single letters, personal names) seems to testify to the fact that people were exploring other possibilities provided by the written word.[85] Furthermore, she echoes Havelock in observing that ancient writers seem to have consciously sought to exploit the visual effect of writing.[86] Writing on archaic period inscriptions (in particular those on pottery and statues) appears to have been regarded as the addition of an artistic element. Writing was also used as a tool in magical manipulation for both public and private curses: the writing down of a curse served to intensify it and render it more effective. This use of writing exemplifies, according to Thomas, a case "where writing was grafted on to an earlier (and continuing) oral feature."[87]

Thomas is also concerned with how the use of writing came to be extended to new contexts in Athens during the later classical period (fifth and fourth centuries BCE).

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[82] *Ibid*, 65.

[83] *Ibid*, 74.

[84] *Ibid*, 74-100.

[85] Until the publication of Thomas' 1992 study on ancient Greek literacy and orality, the significance of graffiti had only received cursory treatment from classical scholars. What discussion existed was divided into two strikingly opposed camps of interpretation. Most treatments of graffiti correlated the appearance of graffiti, whether incised or painted, with the spread of literacy among the general populace in archaic and classical Greece (for example, see M. Lang 1976: 6; S. Stoddart and J. Whitley 1988: 761-772). They assumed that every attestation of graffiti, no matter how brief and even incomprehensible, testified to a relatively high level of literacy among the general population. In the opposing camp were a minority of scholars who rejected this optimistic interpretation of graffiti (see E. Havelock 1982: 198; W.V. Harris 1989: 106). Yet like the studies of those who too readily assumed a connection between graffiti and the extent of literacy, their more pessimistic treatments of the subject also lacked a thorough analysis of graffiti's relevance for the research into ancient literacy. With the publication of Thomas' book, the subject of graffiti finally received a more detailed and nuanced treatment. Thomas found that the incidences of graffiti dating to the archaic period in fact represented a wide range of uses for writing. Her analysis of the "curt and abbreviated" graffiti from this period led her to conclude that much of the archaic period writing was "experimental" and "imaginative," yet also largely unrefined and "faltering" (p. 61).

[86] *Ibid*, 78. Cf. Havelock 1982: 191.

[87] *Ibid*, 80.

She offers a detailed examination of ancient documents, records, and archival practice, in which she emphasizes the "variability of documentary forms and practice" in ancient Greece. The insights gleaned from medieval archival practices as described by Clanchy clearly influence Thomas in her challenge to many studies of ancient archives, particularly the work of E. Posner,[88] which assume that ancient peoples would have employed archives according to modern archival ideas, and that they would have stored documents in a recognizably modern manner.[89] Instead, Thomas notes that the classical use of documents was characterized by "puzzling or inexplicable features," and that these features can only be understood "against the background of oral communication and with the recognition that the uses of writing are not obvious or predictable but influenced both by attitudes to it and by non-written features."[90]

The distinction between modern and ancient archiving calls for further elaboration, as it has direct relevance for the interpretation of the epigraphic material from Iron Age Judah. This is a theme that will be picked up again in the subsequent sections of this chapter regarding writing, literacy, and archiving in ancient Egypt[91] and Mesopotamia. The differences between modern and ancient archiving fall generally into two main categories: (1) how societies store and retrieve texts, and (2) how and when societies incorporate archiving into their bureaucratic and social life. The main concerns of scholars vis-à-vis the first category pertain to why groups of texts were stored, how long they were meant to be kept, and whether the person or institution maintaining an archive ever regarded it as complete.

According to modern notions of archiving, an archive is a grouping of different kinds of records collected together in a central institution, preserved indefinitely for later consultation, and largely regarded as complete by its contemporaries. In contrast, ancient

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[88] E. Posner 1972.

[89] Thomas 1992: 132-144; cf. Thomas 1989: 34-38.

[90] Thomas 1989: 35.

[91] It should be noted here that relatively little is known about the archival practices of ancient Egypt, as there are no surviving state archives (with the exception of the el-Amarna tablets, which might represent an exceptional case (see below, note 100 and later in this chapter, pp. 56-57). Most archival records were probably rendered on papyrus and other perishable materials that could not withstand the test of time and the shifting alluvial deposits of the Nile River Valley, where most official documents were likely stored. For the "guaranteed" destruction of archival papyri due to their fragile nature and the locations where they were stored, cf. D. O'Connor 1997: 13-24, especially p. 15; and S. Quirke 1996: 379-401). But see below, note 177, for groupings of texts found in ancient Egypt and classified by Egyptologists as archives (albeit not of the state).

archives were not solely a receptacle for all kinds of documents; rather, it was only documents specifically selected for preservation that were stored in an archive. The length of time that an archive was retained was influenced by how long the information contained in the records was considered to be useful to the organization or individual by whom it was created.[92] There was no cultural norm in either Egypt or Mesopotamia of old documents surviving to be copied in later centuries: an archive in both regions is designated by Egyptologists and Mesopotamian scholars alike as "an ancient grouping of texts."[93] The contents of the Greek and ANE archives might differ,[94] but not their character as "assemblages of documents retained systematically for some reason."[95] In short, the notion of an archive in the ancient world does *not* imply that contemporaries regarded it as complete.

Furthermore, there does not appear to have been a clear-cut distinction between public and private documents and their storage in either the ANE or the classical worlds. Occasionally private documents could be stored in public archives, while public documents have sometimes been found in private archives.[96] This suggests that the distinction between public and private archives may not really be appropriate for the ancient world.[97] As regards the organization of documents in classical archives, this

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[92] The ancient Mesopotamians did not intend to keep archival records for an indefinite time, and most archival collections only span two, and at most three, generations (P. Michalowski 2003: 451-478; cf. M. Brosius 2003: 169). The Greeks even appear to have distinguished between those records that were to be preserved indefinitely, and those which were kept only for a specific period of time. Typically, the former were inscribed on stone or bronze, whereas the latter were written on a less permanent material, such as papyrus or "whitened boards." "Whitened boards" were a writing medium on which Athenian officials wrote draft documents and accounts in charcoal. These boards were either wiped clean once the debt or due installment was paid, or they were "monumentalized on stone if the public interest required" (J. Davies 2003: 325).

[93] For this definition of an ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian archive, see S. Quirke 1996: 379.

[94] In Greece, "archives" were usually collections of legal documents and decrees, whereas in the ANE, "archives" consisted of collections of predominantly economic texts (cf. M. Brosius 2003: 5).

[95] P. Davies 2003: 324.

[96] For examples of the phenomenon in Mesopotamia (as well as at the Old Assyrian trading colony of Kaniš in central Anatolia) of official documents deposited in private spaces, and *vice versa*, see later in this chapter, pp. 80-81). In Greece by the late fourth century BCE, public archives could house private documents. For example, private records of debt, records of the manumission of slaves, and the recording of private loans on real estate to ensure their security were filed in a public record office or publicly displayed on a stela (see Davies 2003: 330-331).

[97] Moreover, archives were not really "public" in the modern sense of the term: Brosius (2003) observes that, "Ancient public archives were really those that belonged to the administration of the state and were the private archives of the kings, priests, or other political authorities" (p. 11).

remained elementary and even chaotic.[98] This observation holds for not only the layout of the written page but also for the storage of books and documents, and their organization in libraries or archives.

J.P. Small has stressed how unsystematic was the retrieval of documents in ancient Greece, raising the question of whether they were even intended to be retrieved at all. Individuals came to trust their memory instead of developing more sophisticated techniques of document-based organization, mainly because the written word was considered merely a corroboration of what was said orally. Instead of using written words to find other written words, "memory became *the* classical means of cognitively organizing, and most significantly, retrieving words."[99] Ancient Mesopotamian archives, by contrast, were characterized by more systematic methods of organization.[100] Nonetheless, even in Mesopotamian royal contexts, a system and its documentation were not necessarily contained within the confines of a single building.[101]

Regarding the second category of distinction between modern and ancient archiving, that is, how and when societies incorporate archiving into their bureaucratic and social life, it is important to recognize that societies do not immediately develop an "archiving mentality," i.e. the notion that documents could be collected together and organized in a central archive for later consultation. Even in Mesopotamia, where a high standard of organization is detectable in even the earliest archives of the third millennium BCE, the idea that different kinds of record could be collected and stored in a central institution not directly associated to the king, the palace, or a temple did not exist until the Hellenistic period.[102] The primary difference between the use of archives in the ANE and Greek worlds is the early development of a tradition of archival conventions in the

[98] See J.P. Small 1997, especially Chapters 4 (pp. 41-52) and 5 (pp. 53-71). See also Thomas (1989: 72ff.) regarding the lack of organization of documents in the Metroön, the first recognizable archive in Athens (established in the late fifth or early fourth century BCE).
[99] Small 1997: 71. Small's study has been criticized, however, for failing to explore precisely what the Greeks and Romans were memorizing with their memory techniques. Thomas (2000) criticizes Small for not discussing "to what extent these memory techniques ever enabled Greeks and Romans to remember accurately or for any length of time large amounts of information—facts—rather than simple lists; or who indeed they could memorize whole speeches with these methods" (p. 487).
[100] The fact that some of the tablets from the el-Amarna archives in Egypt bear hieratic dockets suggests that some kind of system of retrieval was in place in Egypt as well. The value of el-Amarna in providing data about Egyptian methods of archiving is somewhat compromised, however, by the possibility that foreign scribes active at the site may have introduced a Mesopotamian archival organization.
[101] J.N. Postgate 2001: 181-194.
[102] A. Invernizzi 2003: 302-322.

ANE archives across Mesopotamia. In ancient Greece, by contrast, a system of archival conventions (not to be confused with modern notions of archiving) did not develop immediately upon the advent of writing.

This observation returns us to Thomas' examination of the relationship between literacy and state, and to her fourth and last major point: that the presence of writing does not inevitably entail its bureaucratic and archival use. The Greeks as a rule did not use writing for administrative purposes nearly as much as the Mesopotamians did. Sparta seems to have kept no official records at all; Thomas describes it as "a state which seems to have run in all essentials without the help of writing, let alone archives."[103] In contrast, Athens produced a wide variety of documents in the classical period, and viewed them as reinforcing its radical democracy.

Yet Athens lacked a formal bureaucracy and a definable "archival mentality," according to Thomas. She separates the process of making documents from that of using the documents later as two disparate phases that did not necessarily follow one another, and claims that the emergence of the second phase, what she terms the realization of an "archiving mentality," did not occur until the late fourth century BCE, during the Hellenistic period. Athenians kept collections of records by at least the fourth century, but they regarded them as copies of the more important publicly displayed monuments.[104] Indeed, these stone monuments may have been the only official copy of law or decree both at Athens and elsewhere in Greece up to the end of the fifth century.[105] Moreover, both the content of stone inscriptions and the way in which they were treated by the Greek writers suggest that they were regarded "primarily as symbolic memorials of a decision rather than simply documents intended to record important details for

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[103] Thomas 1992: 136.

[104] Thomas (1989) summons as evidence for this thesis the fact that the ancients habitually referred to inscriptions as they were authoritative, as well as the fact that some inscriptions actually demanded obedience to the stele itself (pp. 45-47). Although Davies (2003) does not entirely agree with Thomas' thesis regarding the late (Hellenistic) date of the development of an "archiving mentality" (opting instead for the fifth century BCE), he nonetheless acknowledges that the language of the public decrees implied that the stelae on which documents were inscribed *were* those documents (p. 328).

[105] Thomas 1992:87. Thomas also points out how counter-intuitive is the notion that a perishable papyrus version of a text could be more authoritative and more likely to survive than a carved and publicly erected stone monument (p. 135). In her earlier work (1989), she makes the valuable observation that the Greeks, because they did not possess a highly developed literate mentality, would not have even placed an emphasis on distinguishing between the original version and inferior copies of a document, nor would they have insisted on verbatim accuracy (p. 47).

administrative purposes."[106] A treaty, for example, was apparently not considered in force if it had not been erected.

Even when the Athenians gained a more recognizable archive in the early fourth century (the Metroön),[107] the documents preserved there were stored in a haphazard and inconsistent fashion.[108] Thomas therefore argues against too loosely applying the term "archives" to ancient Greek practice, as these *demosia grammmata* (meaning literally nothing more than "public writing") were "haphazard mixtures of records on a variety of materials."[109] Moreover, while the Metroön stored the decrees of the Boule (the Council) and the assembly, other public documents resided with officials or in temples. Details about the organization of the Metroön indicate both that it would have been difficult to make a systematic reference to documents, and that some documents which were made were not in fact ever used![110]

As many classicists have done before her, Thomas does identify a connection between the political system of Athens and its use of writing, but unlike previous scholars she believes that the "ideal of public openness and accountability" fostered by democracy led to the use of writing largely for the public display of records, and not for the accumulation of archival records or the promotion of widespread literacy among the general populace.[111] In an article published two years after her 1992 volume,[112] Thomas develops this point further by arguing that the plethora of documents that accompanied the establishment of the radical democracy in the 460s were not new kinds of documents but instead were extensions of the notion that laws and treaties should be inscribed, and

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[106] *Ibid*, 84-85.
[107] Not all classicists agree with Thomas regarding this early fourth century date for the foundation of the Metroön. T. Leslie Shear (1995: 157-190) puts the date of its foundation a little earlier, in the late fifth century. According to Shear, there is a reference quoted from Chamaileon of Herakleia Pontica that, if historical, apparently mentions the storage of public documents in the Metroön around 407/6. The earliest surviving records of the Metroön as a public repository date, however, to the year 375/4, as Shear herself notes (p. 172).
[108] For a more lengthy discussion of the Metroön and its contents, see Thomas 1989: 72ff.
[109] Thomas 1992: 143. To support this point, Thomas notes that archives do not appear often in the sources until the late fourth century, during the Hellenistic period (p.133). She also doubts that the notion of a "central state archive" which contained public documents was very prevalent in the ancient world (p. 142). Like the medieval archive, the classical archive "was an accumulation of different kinds of record" which did not possess a systematic arrangement of its contents to permit easy access or referencing (1989: 78).
[110] Thomas 1992: 140-144; cf. 96-7.
[111] *Ibid*, 144.
[112] Thomas 1994: 33-50.

expressions of the Greek version of the "epigraphic habit." She therefore views these inscriptions more as laws and memorials than as administrative documents.

In this same article, Thomas identifies an additional function of this Greek (and especially Athenian) proclivity to publicly publish laws and enactments in memorializing form: the exertion of power. Although the Athenians did not use writing as an instrument to obtain control, they were not completely immune to the potential of writing to enable the exertion of power. Thomas observes that in the classical period, Athens, as well as other Greek city-states, used written inscriptions—monumental stone stele recording decisions or laws—to emphasize the authority of the polis, whether in the state itself or in other city-states which it dominated. In Athens in particular, inscriptions from the classical period demonstrate the use of the public written word "to confirm, publicize and protect the values of the community."[113] Inscriptions were set up as a "public memorial of honor" or as a way to shame the malefactors and ill-wishers of the state.

At some point in the fourth century, according to Thomas, Athens did finally begin to see the potential of writing for enabling closer control of financial affairs. This period therefore saw the emergence of a new epigraphic activity in Athens—the publishing of accounts and inventories in order to ensure that allies were paying the required tribute, and that their collectors were not embezzling it. In all of her studies, Thomas effectively proves that the exploitation of writing's uses was a slow process in ancient Greece spanning the eighth through the fourth centuries BCE.

Thomas' work and that of Harris have so successfully shaken up the older consensus on ancient literacy, that no subsequent analysis can fail to interact with their conclusions, whether it be to challenge them, or instead to concur and conduct further research on the implications of these conclusions (as the majority of recent studies have done). The years since the creation of a new model for ancient literacy by Harris and Thomas in the late 1980s and early 1990s have seen a virtual explosion of articles and books on various aspects of ancient literacy in Greece (and Rome). In terms of general trends, these articles can roughly be divided into those written by experts who accept the new model and explore its ramifications for specific aspects of ancient Greek practice, and those written by experts who continue to defend the study of literacy's implications

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[113] *Ibid*, 40.

for cognition and intellectual achievement, while at the same time revising their initial assessments in light of the challenges offered by the new model. The last fifteen or so years have therefore witnessed a fruitful and dynamic dialogue on ancient Greek literacy in which both "sides" have summoned their most persuasive and nuanced arguments.

Some classicists such as B. Powell and J. Sickinger continue to stress the advent of writing in Greece as sparking a period of radical cultural change, but have married this viewpoint to the methodological approach of Harris and Thomas by focusing more specifically on the uses of writing in ancient Greece. Powell's work in particular has been concentrated on formulating a theory to explain why the alphabet was adapted, or as he claims, "invented," by the Greeks in the first place. In a series of books and articles,[114] Powell claims that the Greek alphabet was invented to record hexameter verse by a single individual, an Euboian working with a Phoenician informant around 800 BCE.[115] Included in his thesis is the assertion that the West Semitic script of the Phoenicians was not an alphabet, but instead a syllabary.[116] He goes further than others (such as Havelock) who have proposed that the alphabet was invented to write down hexametric verse[117] by arguing that what motivated the adaptor was the desire to record not a few hexameters but the texts attributed to Homer. He hypothesizes therefore the existence of initially a single text of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, written by the adaptor who heard Homer in the West Ionic region of Euboia.

In his first book, *Homer and the Origins of the Alphabet*, Powell supports his theory with a survey of early Greek inscriptions. He finds significance in the fact that not a single early alphabetic inscription for any business practice has been found, whereas two of the earliest inscriptions (mid—late eighth century BCE), the Cup of Nestor and the Diplyon Jug, refer to secular activity that is expressed in traditional epic language. He argues that these two inscriptions reflect the same process of oral composition as that

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[114] See Powell 1991; 1997: 3-32; 2002.

[115] Powell locates the island of Euboia as the place of adaptation, particularly since it sustained relations with the Near East during the Dark Ages (ca. 1100-750 BCE). (According to Powell, the discovery of Euboian pottery at the site of north Syrian Al Mina indicates the Euboians maintained a trading post there).

[116] Powell believes that the Euboian adaptor "received detailed information from a Phoenician about the West Semitic syllabary"… "and then changed it to suit the recording of hexametric verse" (1997: 29-32; cf. also 2002: 194-195 and 1991, especially Chapter 1).

[117] The theory that the Greek alphabet was invented to record hexameter verse is not new—it was first proposed by H.T. Wade-Gery in the J.H. Grey lectures of 1949, as Powell acknowledges.

which produced the Homeric poems.[118] Through the articulation of this theory, Powell advances the notion, echoing Goody, and Havelock, that the alphabet is a revolutionizing technology, because for the first time a writing system was designed to represent speech – this invention made possible the works of the lyric, choral, and tragic poets, as well as the works of prose by Herodotus and Thucydides.[119] In his second book, *Writing and the Origins of Greek Literature*, Powell highlights the critical role that "alphabetic writing, as a technology, played in the preservation, creation, and dissemination" of archaic and classical Greek poetry.[120]

Powell's theory is remarkable in its daring and refreshing originality, and his observation that archaic Greece does not seem initially to have used writing for economic or public texts bolsters the point made by Thomas that not all cultures immediately use writing in the same way. The fact that the earliest Greek inscriptions were primarily private and almost literary in character also supports Powell's argument that they reflect the concerns of an aristocratic society intent on leading its own good life. The impression gained from the "potpourri" of early Greek inscriptions, writes Powell, "is that Greek literacy first flourished in an aristocratic world that is socially symposiasitic and temperamentally agonistic…where there was good food, drink, athletic contests, and bardic song."[121] Like Goody and Watt, Powell stresses the particular implications of the alphabet for the development of Greek intellectual achievement, but unlike Goody and Watt, he locates this technology within a matrix of Greek practice, thereby avoiding the worst of mechanistic determinism. The problems with Powell's theory are fairly self-evident—his denial that West Semitic script is an alphabet, and his highly speculative theory regarding the "invention" of the alphabet by a single individual with a single purpose.

Powell is primarily concerned with understanding the mimesis of Homer's epic poems and of other early Greek works of poems and prose, and with locating them within the context of Greek intellectual culture of the archaic age; Sickinger, on the other hand, focuses his attention on the relationship between writing and the city-state of the archaic

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[118] Powell 1991: Chapter 3. Cf. also Powell 1997: 24-25.
[119] See in particular Powell 2002: 192-193.
[120] *Ibid*, 188.
[121] Powell 1991: 183-184.

and classical ages.   His work expresses itself as a more direct reaction to the new model of literacy as proposed by Harris and in particular by Thomas. In his book on *Public Records and Archives in Classical Athens* and in an article published in the same year,[122] it is clear that the crux of Sickinger's argument is his profound disagreement with Thomas over the relation of stone inscriptions to other practices of record-keeping in Athens during the late sixth, fifth, and fourth centuries BCE.

While Thomas (followed by C. Hedrick)[123] has stressed the symbolic significance of ancient documents and downplayed their practical uses, Sickinger seeks to redress what he finds an overly pessimistic outlook by contending that writing was more widely used for both administrative purposes and for the preservation of official texts than is allowed by Thomas and Hedrick.[124] He asserts that documents were both numerous and ubiquitous in ancient Athens throughout the archaic and classical periods, and that the Athenians kept written documents even as early as the late seventh century BCE.[125] Documents were made public in more forms than the "monumental" in Athens even before the late fifth century, argues Sickinger.[126] Even though the Athenian sources of the classical period do not frequently mention documents made of papyrus, he believes that documents were regularly recorded on wood and papyrus by the Athenians.[127]

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[122] Sickinger 1999a and 1999b: 229-246.

[123] C. Hedrick 1994: 157-174.

[124] See also the earlier criticism of Thomas's views by W.C. West 1989: 529-543.

[125] Sickinger 1999a: Chapter 1, especially p. 72; 1999b: 229.

[126] Sickinger is correct in observing that the stone inscriptions witness to the practice of state magistrates keeping the accounts, but as he notes, they say nothing about how these functionaries did this. While Thomas and Hedrick argue that the primary responsibility of these functionaries was the setting up of these inscribed texts, Sickinger believes that they kept their accounts on other materials before publishing some of them on stone (see Sickinger 1999a: Chapter 3 on fifth century records and archives, especially pp. 62-76; cf. 1999b: 234-235). He admits, however, that the only surviving copies of records such as treaties, inventories, and other financial documents, as well as of laws and decrees are the inscriptions on stone. Sickinger argues that this lack of other types of documents does not prove that these other texts did not exist or were not preserved. Sickinger's best evidence for the making of documents on materials other than stone from the late seventh century onwards is the tradition about the promulgation of the laws of Drakon and Solon (reputedly preserved on *axones*, translated as wooden beams or planks) and several honorary decrees dating from the second half of the fifth century calling for their double publication on stone and wooden tablets. No surviving copies of these wooden texts have survived, however. Sickinger's evidence for the Athenian Assembly's use of wooden tablets to publicize the agenda of its meetings (as well as other items of pending legislation) is quite late, appearing in Aristotle's Constitution of the Athenians (fourth century BCE) (Sickinger 1999b: 234-238).

[127] 1999a: 4, 34 and 1999b: 234. Against the argument that Athenian documents on wood and papyrus were ephemeral and perishable, and that they were not intended for long-term preservation, Sickinger (1999b) argues rather weakly that, "We know too little about Athenian documents on papyrus to draw

The primary difficulty faced by Sickinger throughout his study (and the one which effectively weakens his argument) is that he must extrapolate from later evidence in order to make speculative conclusions about earlier Greek practice. In addition to the late date of most of his evidence, Sickinger's work suffers from a number of other problems, not least of which is his assumption that Athenian society was already "document-minded" by the sixth and fifth centuries. Although it is never explicitly stated in his book, Sickinger seems to believe that with the advent of writing in Greece came an almost immediate literary mentality. He argues, for example, that the lack of inscribed documents in many (primarily secular) areas of activity does *not* reveal that only certain types of documents were written down (as Thomas maintains), but instead that "underrepresented types of documents were seldom inscribed on stone in the first place."[128]

Thus far, Sickinger has been alone in issuing a lengthy, albeit unsatisfactory, challenge to the conclusions reached by Harris, Thomas, and Hedrick regarding ancient Greek literacy during the archaic and classical periods. Most scholars have accepted these conclusions and have built upon them by carrying out more specific investigations into various aspects of ancient Greek practice. In particular, they have continued to elaborate on Thomas' characterization of archaic and classical Greek society as marked by a continuum rather than a disruption between the literate and the oral. They have found that even those areas of Greek practice most closely associated with the written word – the composition of the earliest Greek literature,[129] the publication of works of poetry and prose,[130] the codification of law,[131] archiving,[132] and education[133] – display the mark of a society profoundly shaped by oral modes of discourse.

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broad conclusions, positive or negative, about their long-term survival", although he concedes that "the life of many documents written on wooden tablets was undoubtedly short" (p. 241).

[128] 1999a: 74.

[129] For example, R. Whitaker (1996: 205-220) has shown through a comparison of the poetic traditions of archaic Greece and those of the Nguni praise singers of South Africa that "the interaction between literacy and orality is an enormously complex process, with a great variety of manifestations" (p. 207). Following Thomas, Whitaker has argued against arriving at generalizations about "oral poetry" and "the oral poet" from the evidence of a single oral tradition (as Parry and Lord tended to do with their South Slavic model of oral poetry). He concludes that the variety in the oral-literate practice of South Africa teaches us to expect such variety in archaic Greece.

[130] Publishing, as conceived in modern terms, is a highly literate activity dominated by the written word from the beginning of a text's inspiration through the editing process on down to the publishing process. Yet D. Kelly (1996: 149-163) has shown that ancient ways of publishing bore the imprint of oral as well as

The conclusions reached by the wide array of studies on ancient Greek practice related to writing and literacy, while affirming the new model of ancient Greek literacy in its broad outlines, have also pushed the dialogue about Greek literacy away from a categorical denial of generalizing models of literacy towards more balanced assessments of writing as, in the words of A.K. Bowman and G. Woolf, "an enabling technology or as a necessary but not sufficient precondition for particular developments."[134] This new approach has been encapsulated in the publication of a collection of essays aimed at finding out how the intellectual and social practices of ancient Greece were affected by the introduction and use of written texts.[135] As the volume's editor writes, all of the essays in this volume "demonstrate that reactions to writing differed from one context to another, and no single pattern or interpretation accounts for the variety of cultural change in ancient Greece."[136] The fact that each essay contained in the volume takes it as a given that ancient Greek society responded to the advent of writing in its own unique way, and that writing engendered different degrees of literate activity commensurate with its

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more literate modes of communication. Older studies by S. Flory (1980: 12-28) and A. Momigliano (1980: 361-376) had already observed that the most common way in which a work became known (i.e. "published") in ancient Greece was through public readings to large audiences in public spaces. Kelly adds another form of publication based on his analysis of Xenophon's *Hellenica*. He argues for the existence of private readings among small (elite) groups who would then discuss the work: this way of "publishing" would allow immediate comment and changes.

[131] In classical Greece, written law was considered a restraint on arbitrary judgment, and in Athens was central to democracy; nonetheless, written law did not initially force out unwritten law, but developed alongside it for a time. In an article focusing on the codification of law in ancient Athens, Thomas (1996: 9-33) advances the theory that in archaic Greece there existed the concepts of "oral law," which could even be sung, and "unwritten law" (*agraphos nomos*).

[132] In recent years, several studies have appeared focusing on the ways in which the written word was organized and retrieved in ancient Greece. Both J.K. Davies (2003: 323-343) and M. Brosius (2003: 1-16) have stressed the great variety in Greek documentary and archival procedures. J.P. Small (1997) has devoted an entire book to examining the technical problems encountered by the Greeks and Romans with the advent of the written word. She contends that they used memory as an oral tool both to organize documents and to retrieve them, instead of employing written words to find other written words.

[133] Education in ancient Greece is another area of ancient Greek practice where oral tradition only gradually gave way to written tradition, as two recent studies by K. Robb (1994) and T.J. Morgan (1999: 46-61) make clear. The core of Robb's argument is that through the end of the fifth century, Greek education continued to be focused on hearing and memorizing epic and poetic tales (oral *paideia*) that were designed to teach proper ways to behave in a wide range of social contexts. Morgan's study largely supports Robb's assertion that the system of oral *paideia* and the mastery of written texts were two accomplishments that only gradually grew together.

[134] Bowman and Woolf 1994: 4.

[135] These essays originally were delivered at two conferences held at Rice University in April 2000 and November 2001. Edited by H. Yunis, they were published in a 2003 volume entitled: *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece*.

[136] H. Yunis 2003: 13.

reception within any given Greek social practice, demonstrates how effectively the work of Harris and in particular that of Thomas paved the way for more nuanced investigations into the complexities surrounding literacy's interaction with the predominantly oral traditions of the ancient Greek world.[137]

Summary of the Consensus Regarding Literacy in Ancient Greece

Given the historical approach taken in this section to the analysis of the scholarship regarding ancient Greek writing and literacy, it is helpful to conclude this discussion by briefly summarizing the current consensus regarding the shape of literacy in ancient Greece in the archaic and classical periods. In Greece, it has been seen that in almost every area of Greek practice, oral tradition and oral modes of communication continued to exist and even thrive after the advent of writing. The earliest uses of writing in Greece testify to the grafting of written forms of expression onto oral forms. This phenomenon is illustrated most strikingly in the composition process of the two most famous works of early Greek literature, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The current consensus regarding the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* – that these two works took on written form in the archaic period (ca. 750-480 BCE) but that they were shaped by the requirements of performances before live audiences – demonstrates both the markedly oral nature of early Greek poetic expression, but also the fact that complex literary creations could be committed to writing within a culture not characterized by other sophisticated uses of writing, such as its use in administration and archiving.

We have also seen that writing was initially not used for many purposes in archaic Greece, and that its use spread only slowly during the eighth-seventh centuries. The earliest epigraphic discoveries, consisting of dedications, epitaphs, and graffiti on cups

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[137] The essays contained in the volume edited by H. Yunis (2003) deal with the interaction between writing and orality and a variety of Greek practices. See in particular the essay by R. Thomas (2003: 162-188) on the relationship between epideictic lectures (display performances) and the written versions of those lectures; the essay by D. Cohen (pp. 78-96) on legal practice in the Athenian courts in which he demonstrates "the tension in Athens between, on the one hand, the administrative, document-oriented understanding of civic identity, and a much more powerful oral culture of informal knowledge" (p. 83); the essay by M. Gagarin (pp. 59-77) on how the Greeks incorporated writing into legislation; the essay by A. Ford (pp. 15-37) on how traditional Greek performance culture gave way to the textualization of song; and the essay by A. Henrich (pp. 38-58) on the way in which written texts gradually came to be incorporated into traditional religious actions in performance. Contributions by several other scholars explore the incorporation of writing in other areas of Greek practice—Greek medicine (L. Dean-Jones), Greek science (G. Lloyd), philosophy (C.H. Kahn), critical reading (H. Yunis), and cultural reflection (R. Hunter).

and bowls, suggest that the Greeks used writing in the archaic period primarily to allow inanimate objects to "speak," to reinforce the spoken word and grant it apparent permanence, to guard property symbolically, to offer people and things to the gods, and even to increase the potency of magical spells. *If* they used writing to record business transactions and/or make archival records during this early period, not a single instance of these uses for writing has survived.[138] Even later in the sixth and fifth centuries, when writing began to expand greatly into the public realm, as testified by the discovery of coins, stone inscriptions of laws, and writing on vases, the use of writing for administrative purposes was not exploited anywhere near to its fullest extent like we find in ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia.

Some city states, like Sparta, formed a bureaucracy without the use of writing; others, most notably Athens, developed a democratic form of government in which the public recording of documents was encouraged. Even then, the Athenians did not immediately become "document-minded" – documents were published publicly on stelae, while copies were kept on perishable materials not intended for long-term preservation. Although there is little evidence for them, archives may have existed in Athens by the fifth century. But they were located in different places throughout the city and lacked organized systems of retrieval: it seems that the concept that a document could be filed away for later reference was not immediately apparent to the Athenians. The construction of a more centralized archive in Athens (the Metroön) in the late fifth-early fourth centuries, signals a developing realization that public records could be valuable sources of information. Yet even in this period there is "almost no evidence for the arrangement and organization of the Metroön, nor of Athenians looking anything up there."[139]

In their daily activities, the Greeks continued to rely mainly on oral communication and not on writing. The public, collective activities of Greek communities ensured that oral discourse flourished in both the public as well as the private sphere. Most Greeks had little reason and as little means to become literate beyond the ability to read and write names. There were probably only two categories of

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[138] One cannot rule out altogether the Greek use of writing for commercial purposes at an early date, since such records would likely have been made on perishable materials.
[139] Thomas 1989: 72.

fully literate people in fourth century Athens: (1) citizen and slave functionaries, who used writing in their capacities as scribes, archivists, record keepers, teachers, and accountants, and (2) the social and economic elite, who made use of texts to conduct their personal, financial, legal, and political affairs.

Even in areas of Greek practice where writing made inroads in the sixth, fifth, and fourth centuries – the codification of law, the archiving of records, the educating of children, even the publication of "literature" – writing interacted with oral methods in surprising and complex ways; in no way can it be said that writing spelled the "death" of orality. Still, the adoption of written modes of expression did gradually and increasingly affect many of the intellectual and social practices of the Greeks. The degree and extent of cultural change did not correlate, however, with a general and predictable set of implications that always accompany the advent of writing and literacy, but rather depended on the various attitudes and responses towards writing that arose uniquely within each cultural context.

Writing and Literacy in Ancient Egypt

In studies of writing and literacy in ancient Egypt, it is invariably the elite class of scribes and their writing activities (whether literary or relating to the scribes' bureaucratic functions) that occupy the center stage. H. te Velde, for example, describes the Egyptian scribes as "the core and backbone of Ancient Egyptian civilization" in an article on ancient Egyptian scribes and literacy.[140] Within the context of the Egyptian state, all scribal activity was also bureaucratic activity. There is little evidence of scribes who did not hold office in the palace or temple; the prerequisite for a career in the Egyptian bureaucracy was the ability to read and write. Yet their administrative activities have been transcended by their literary legacy in the minds of many scholars. For many years, experts have been engaged in an extensive examination of the scribal literary tradition of ancient Egypt, offering a range of detail about scribal literary practice that is impressive in its scope, and highly sophisticated in its analysis.

The tendency to focus on the literate activities of the elite has been bolstered in the last twenty years by the growing consensus that writing was greatly restricted and

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[140] H. te Velde 1986: 253.

controlled by the state, and that rates of literacy were quite low in pharaonic Egypt. In an article published in 1983, J. Baines and C. Eyre estimated a one percent literacy rate for the Old Kingdom (ca. 2625-2130 BCE),[141] based upon the highest estimate of literate administrators (10,000) and the lowest population estimate (one million).[142] Their assessment has largely been accepted by scholars,[143] with the exception of few dissenting voices.[144]

Furthermore, the use of writing in ancient Egypt exemplifies the "principle of scarcity," in that writing as a technology was closely tied to the ideological and functional requirements of the state, and was not diffused widely for other purposes.[145] For the needs of the administration, only a small number of literate people would have been deemed necessary. These technicians of writing were a small group of inner elite who comprised the administrative officeholders near the king;[146] even as early as the First Dynasty (ca. 3000-2800 BCE), the titles "scribe" and "administrator of scribes" were attached to people of the highest status[147] (according to later evidence, the kings were also literate).[148]

From at least the beginning of the Old Kingdom period, the scribal occupation in Egypt was also hereditary;[149] this passing down of the scribal occupation from one generation to the next parallels the hereditary character of the Egyptian administration,

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[141] Because there is some slight discrepancy in the dates given by different scholars for each historical period and reign, all dates will be drawn from the volume *Ancient Egypt*, edited by D. P. Silverman (published in 1997), in order to maintain consistency throughout this chapter.

[142] Baines and Eyre 1983: 65-96. Cf. Baines 1992: 333-337 for a reiteration of this estimate.

[143] See, for example, P. Piacentini 1998: 863-870 and H. te Velde 1986: 253-265.

[144] See, however, the article by L. Lesko (1990: 656-667), in which he contends that Baines and Eyre aimed too low in their estimation of literacy rates in ancient Egypt.

[145] Baines 1983: 572-599.

[146] These literate individuals were tied to the king by two factors – their office and their membership in a type of kinship group (the *p't*) (see J. Baines and N. Yoffee 1998: 218). Scholars do not know much more than this about the social organization of the elite, or of the rest of the population for that matter (see Baines 1988: 198-199).

[147] Cf. Baines 1988: 197; Baines 1983: 580; and Baines and Yoffee 1998: 218. Baines (1983: 580) notes that the elite consistently had themselves depicted as scribes.

[148] See Baines 1983: 580; Baines and Eyre 1983: 77-81. Upon examining the evidence for whether or not the Egyptian kings could read and write, Baines and Eyre conclude that it was "very probable" that kings were literate. In later texts, even the king was referred to as an "office-holder."

[149] Piacentini (1998: 863-870) has noted the natural tendency, among a literate family, to conserve the rank and stature which had been gained by educating the son, grandson, etc. The tendency for the scribal office to be inherited has been noted by others, including E. Wente (1995: 2219). There are cases in every époque, however, of "upstart" scribes rising above their low social status by becoming educated.

and together these two phenomena produced a "veritable dynasty" of scribes.[150] The impact of this principle of scarcity (so clearly illustrated by the restriction of writing to a small class of officeholders in the Egyptian administration whose positions were largely hereditary) corresponds with and is complemented by the use of writing for display, as writing "was more potent for being restricted" (for more on the close integration of art and writing, see below).[151]

Given the fact that elite status was invariably identified with literacy in ancient Egypt, the consensus regarding literacy rates as well as the restriction of literacy in ancient Egypt is doubtless fairly accurate. Care must be taken, however, in not overlooking the possible expansions (as well as contractions) in both the uses of writing and the rates of literacy across time.[152] For example, the New Kingdom period (ca. 1539-1075 BCE) produced an unprecedented array of literary texts, monumental inscriptions, school texts, and even informal inscriptions (graffiti) that contrast sharply with the comparatively limited repertoire (in both range and numbers) of written products dating to the earlier Old Kingdom. While this development does not necessarily imply an increase in literacy rates, such a possibility should be considered.[153] Conversely, during the following Third Intermediate (ca. 1075-656 BCE) and Late (ca. 664-525 BCE) periods, a number of trends, many of which had already begun to emerge in the late New Kingdom period, probably led to a decrease in literacy along with this decrease in population. The increasingly close association of administration and high culture with

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[150] Piacentini 1998: 863-870.

[151] Baines 1983: 577.

[152] Even during the Old Kingdom period, when the restriction of literacy to a tiny segment of the population was at its most extreme, there were different degrees in the knowledge and usage of writing. According to the conclusions of Piacentini's study (1998: 863-870), the majority of the literate population, notably those functionaries bearing the simple title *zš* ("scribe"), only knew hieratic writing. On the other hand, many of the owners of tombs who were of an elevated status did not possess, among their titles, that of scribe. Instead they often bore the function of "priest-reader," which implied mastery both of writing and of ritualistic reading of hieroglyphic texts.

[153] Baines (1983: 572-599), who has chronicled a slow expansion in the range of texts during the New Kingdom period, nonetheless does not feel this expansion need necessarily be connected to an increased rate of literacy. On the other hand, A. Peden (2001), in his analysis of New Kingdom graffiti, has pointed to the evidence from Deir el-Medina as well as the unequaled number of epigraphs all along the length of the Nile River Valley dating to this period as indicative of a "significant broadening of social classes who were able to write out at least their own names and titles" (p. 290).

temples appears to have discouraged literacy, as did the growing distance between spoken and written language, and differentiation of script types.[154]

It is likewise logical to focus on the monumental projects of ancient Egypt as the ultimate expression of this restriction of literacy to a select elite class. But there is a major difficulty inherent in utilizing the most visible and grandiose data for assessing the distribution of literate skills in ancient Egyptian society: namely, the elite classes are the only ones given a voice in the monumental inscriptions, which represent the vast majority of surviving Egyptian texts. These inscriptions focused on "the ruling group, on religion, and on the symbols of Egypt as a single polity"; moreover, in Egypt the written and the pictorial evidence simply did not represent many aspects of Egyptian life.[155]

The only major snap-shot of non-scribal writing activity comes from the New Kingdom workmen's village of Deir el-Medina,[156] where a good number of the ordinary village craftsmen, guardians, doorkeepers, and workmen (as well as scribes and draftsmen) scrawled their names and titles on numerous rock faces (graffiti) and other details of their daily lives on broken pottery or chips of limestone (ostraca).[157] Given its specialized character, Deir el-Medina probably does not represent a typical village in relation to the number of literate and semi-literate individuals who lived and worked there.[158] Initially built during the reign of Thutmose I (Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1493-1482 BCE), this community provided skilled workmen for the elaborate sepulchers of the

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[154] Baines and Eyre 1983: 68. Both the decrease in literacy during this period as well as the increasing restriction of high culture to the temples is reflected in the record of graffiti. Peden (2001: 290-291) has noted the significant lack of known textual graffiti from Lower and Middle Egypt dating to this period. To explain this development, Peden suggests a fall in literacy in certain parts of the country because of advancing decentralization.

[155] Baines and Yoffee 1998: 211.

[156] Deir el-Medina dates from the time of Thutmose I (ca. 1493-1482 BCE) to the end of the Twentieth Dynasty (ca. 1075 BCE).

[157] The graffiti on rock faces also consist of inspection memoranda as well as the occasional prayer or literary excerpt; the ostraca include letters, memoranda, accounts, legal documents, lists, etc. What motivated the authors of the graffiti at Deir el-Medina? Perhaps "vanity" or "alleviating manic boredom," states Peden (p. 154). Perhaps some wished to leave a votive graffito, believing it to be more potent if written in a royal cemetery; or maybe these workers and scribes left their scribblings because they were awe-struck at the significance of a place reserved for the royal dead and the deities thought to live in the environment of the tombs.

[158] Baines and Eyre (1983) are probably correct to point out that the atypical and specialized character of this community renders problematic the nature of the evidence of literacy from this site. They write that "the community is likely to have been one of the most literate of all in relation to its social status, because of the unusual amount of contact the men had with writing" (p. 86).

Ramesside rulers carved out of the rock in the Wadi Biban el-Muluk (now known as the Valley of the Kings).

Until quite recently, the startling discovery of the Deir el-Medina graffiti and ostraca largely represented the sole exception in a pharaonic-era Egyptian literacy that appeared limited to fully literate male scribal specialists and members of the elite and royal classes. Fortunately, the Deir el-Medina inscriptions awakened an interest in a few scholars to investigate the possibility that other kinds of literacy may have existed in ancient Egypt, and that other members of society, such as women, lower-level officials, and even ordinary workmen, may sometimes have possessed literate skills. Echoing some of the current trends found in literacy studies of other ancient regions (such as ancient Greece), these experts have shown themselves to be concerned not so much with identifying rates of literacy in Egypt as they are with delineating the various ways in which writing was used, particularly in graffiti and in letters.

Among the scholars engaged in bringing to light data regarding other types of literacy is D. Sweeney, who seeks to contribute to the issue of female literacy by focusing on letters (inscribed on ostraca) sent and arguably written by women.[159] She concentrates on the small but significant percentage (around fourteen percent) of the 470 or so letters sent by or addressed to women from the New Kingdom village of Deir el-Medina.[160] Sweeney finds in these letters probable (albeit inconclusive) evidence for at least limited female literacy during the New Kingdom era. Care must be taken, however, not to draw general conclusions about female literacy among the lower ranks of the Egyptian elite from this data, as the site of Deir el-Medina was so highly specialized and

[159] D. Sweeney 1993: 523-529. Equally intriguing are the hieratic graffiti left by female visitors on the columns and walls of the Amun Temple of Tuthmose III at Deir el-Bahri. Like those of the male visitors, these graffiti are comprised of fervent appeals to the leading deities of the Amun Temple. These women were often chantresses in one of the great Theban temples, usually that of Amun at Karnak. Peden, who describes these informal inscriptions in his book on ancient Egyptian graffiti (2001), believes that these women were illiterate and that their visit was enabled by the "courtesy" of their husbands or a literate male friend. Nonetheless he does concede that these graffiti could be a sign of female literacy, as could a graffito at Deir el-Bahri (DGB no. 27) which reads: "Do good, do good, O Hathor, Mistress of Djosret, <to> the citizeness Tamit." Peden thinks it likely, however, that this request was penned for Tamit by a literate male companion (see pp. 122-123).

[160] B. Lesko (1999: 247-254) has also examined several letters sent by women, including two letters coming from professional female weavers and addressed to the king. There is nothing about these letters, however, to suggest that they were written by the women themselves and not by professional scribes (writing according to dictation). Moreover, all of the examples of letters cited by Lesko come from highly placed, elite women holding positions of authority as supervisors in royal weaving studios or as celebrants in temples.

was probably not typical of village communities in ancient Egypt. Furthermore, the corpus of letters sent by women (twenty-seven) or to women (thirty-nine) at Deir el-Medina could have been written and/or read by professional scribes rather than by the women themselves, as Sweeney herself observes.[161]

In another article on the subject of literacy in Egypt, P. der Manuelian decries the fact that the majority of studies of Egyptian literacy has focused on those elite literati who were capable of composing texts and even at times of researching and reproducing earlier stages of the language.[162] He seeks to remedy this skewed portrait of Egyptian literacy by concentrating instead on evidence for semi-literacy in Egypt, namely, the erasures of portions of Egyptian inscriptions. By focusing on what the Egyptians scratched out on walls rather than what they inscribed, der Manuelian is led to conclude that royal agents of the New Kingdom possessed a variety of different literacy levels. Nonetheless, der Manuelian's study is not as suggestive about a possible expansion of literate skills during the New Kingdom period as he would like to believe; at most his analysis can only lay claim to a certain degree of incompetence within the privileged class of scribal officials.

Probably the most welcome supplement to the dialogue on Egyptian literacy which helps to counteract the predominance of elite-focused literacy studies is A. Peden's recent study of the "scope and roles" of graffiti in pharaonic Egypt published in 2001. Peden begins his book by making an observation that many other scholars writing about literacy in Egypt have overlooked, namely, that Egyptian pharaonic culture was unusually graffiti-obsessed. Over the course of their long history, the ancient Egyptians produced a remarkable amount of casual and intimate inscriptions that no other contemporary region either in Mesopotamia or in the Mediterranean basin ever matched. Peden proceeds to chronicle the fluctuations in the relative amount of these graffiti across time, from the Old Kingdom (beginning around 2625 BCE) until the Macedonian conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, and to describe the shifting roles played by casual inscriptions.[163]

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[161] Sweeney 1999: 526.
[162] der Manuelian 1999: 285-299.
[163] Peden further specifies that the body of material he proposes to list and analyze is the "hieroglyphic or hieratic inscriptions written with ink on tomb and temple walls or columns and with those texts inscribed

Peden is careful not to commit the error of using the inconclusive evidence of graffiti to draw hasty conclusions about the rates of literacy during the different historical periods in Egypt.[164] A thorough reading of his book hints at why this is so: the often insurmountable difficulty of determining exactly who wrote down these informal inscriptions. The great majority of the writers who scrawled graffiti were very likely scribes: both the content and location of the graffiti (see more below) reveal the elite and official identity of the graffiti-writers. Furthermore, many of these writers indicated their function as scribes by providing their scribal titles along with their names. But the title of scribe could also be assumed in ancient Egypt in order to claim a degree of literacy for oneself, as several experts have noted.[165] This fact makes it uncertain whether some of the graffiti-writers were fully or only partially literate (i.e. were able to write their name and title, but not much else). The brevity of much of the graffiti as well as the frequent failure of the graffiti-writers to provide a date also renders problematic conclusions about both the literacy level of the inscriber as well as his or her identity.

As for the graffiti attributed to non-scribes (such as a good percentage of the graffiti found at Deir el-Medina), the possibility exists that some or most of these inscriptions may have been scribbled down for them by professional scribes.[166] Furthermore, when it comes to the corpus of sale records from Deir el-Medina, analysis of these texts shows that the scribes seem to have been the "chief guarantors of the procedures."[167] There is a noteworthy exception to this rule: a papyrus regarding the handing-over of a bronze bowl after the death of its owner that contains two statements written by different people, one of whom wrote well and one who wrote poorly.[168] The two writers were not only "ordinary workmen" but were paid "for the writings they have

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with an implement on rock-surfaces such as boulders and also cliff-faces" (p. xx). He does not consider marks or texts on individual objects such as pots as "graffiti," because they solely designate either the owner of the vessel or the atelier that made it. In most cases where these marks or texts appear on pots, these simply represent identifying marks rather than being a "true writing system."

[164] In fact, he does not speculate much at all about what these graffiti signify for literacy rates, apart from observing that literacy and literate culture were largely limited to the elite upper classes in every period of Egyptian society.

[165] Cf. Baines and Eyre 1983: 87 and Peden 2001: 150-154.

[166] Cf. Peden 2001: 150-154 and Sweeney 1993: 526. Certainly in earlier periods, no literacy was assumed on the part of the parties to an agreement or of those witnessing to it. Anonymous professional scribes wrote sale and legal agreements and listed the witnesses after the text, but these witnesses did not themselves write (Baines and Eyre 1983: 75).

[167] Baines and Eyre 1983: 75.

[168] J. Čerńy 1945: 40, doct. 4. See also Baines and Eyre 1983: 74.

made concerning the deposition of their father." In this way, a family matter was settled without having to pay for the service of a scribe, and two relatives of the deceased earned some extra money.

As noted above, the usefulness of Deir el-Medina as a witness to the spread of literacy among a broader range of people during the New Kingdom era is limited, because the site is very likely unrepresentative of most villages in relation to the number of literate and semi-literate individuals who lived and worked there. Outside of this site, there is very little data suggesting that any of the lower classes had gained literate skills. Furthermore, the context and content of most of the graffiti only confirms the view that literacy largely remained the preserve of scribal officials and elites down through the New Kingdom period. Among the earliest exemplars of graffiti writing in Egypt is the recording of various official expeditions on rock surfaces such as boulders and cliff-faces. These commemorative rock graffiti, typically consisting of the names and titles of the writers, were rendered by state officials in the various remote places through which they passed on state business or where they were engaged in mining and/or quarrying operations for the state.[169] The use of writing to commemorate expeditions of this kind was joined during the Middle Kingdom period by the appearance of groups of graffiti on pilgrimage routes, to venerate rulers and deities.[170]

The notion that one could, by writing one's name and title in a holy place, attract to oneself the blessings associated with that location also appears to be at play in a significant amount of graffiti dating primarily to the New Kingdom period (ca. 1539-1075 BCE).[171] For this era, Peden describes an extensive catalogue of visitors' graffiti

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[169] The practice began during the Old Kingdom period but was engaged in with increasing gusto by the Middle Kingdom (ca. 1980-1630 BCE) officials, who recorded expeditions of this type using a huge quantity of rock graffiti.

[170] The most noteworthy example of "pilgrimage" graffiti is the several groups of inscriptions found in the Theban Western Desert (Wadi el-Hol). Wadi el-Hol was not only an important caravan stop but also was situated along a pilgrimage route; in one graffito at this site, a certain Dedusobek announces that he was journeying from Abydos to take part in rites for the deceased Eleventh Dynasty ruler Nebhepetre Montuhotep II. Another group of inscriptions at this site show that the goddess Hathor was venerated at this caravan stop.

[171] An early example of this so-called visitors' graffiti does exist for the Old Kingdom period: a cluster of informal inscriptions dating to the late Fifth or early Sixth Dynasty (ca. 2350 BCE) consists of around a dozen semi-hieratic graffiti texts preserving the names and titles of some of the personnel who served the temple during this period. These were scratched on the paving stones of two rooms at the entrance to the pyramid-temple of King Djedkare Isesi at Saqqara. Peden suggests that these graffiti writers may have hoped "to benefit spiritually from the sanctity and offerings for the dead king" (p. 4). A number of graffiti

(or *Besucherinschriften*), such as the ink inscriptions in hieratic found at the Fifth Dynasty funerary temple of Sahure at Abu Sir and the Old Kingdom monuments at Saqqara. The contents of the graffiti found at Saqqara leads Peden to speculate that visitors journeyed to that site for several reasons: "to inspect out of a sense of curiosity and piety, the great monuments of a distant past; to offer up prayers to the gods of Western Memphis on behalf of themselves and their families; to honor the memories of famed rulers of the Old Kingdom; and to ask the latter to intercede with the gods for the benefit of the petitioner."[172] Most of the visitors held at least the position of an ordinary scribe (perhaps attached to a local temple or bureau); others held even higher positions. Regarding the notion that a wider spectrum of people came to possess literate skills in New Kingdom Egypt, the most that can be said is that there appears to have been a broader range of people among the elite classes (possibly including some women) who were exposed to the products of writing and who could write out at least their own names and titles. The case of Deir el-Medina, the workmen's village, remains exceptional.

An additional characteristic feature of the discourse on ancient Egyptian literacy is an increasing interest in the cognitive aspects of written texts, and particularly in how writing interacted in both an active and passive sense with two main spheres of Egyptian cultural development: the development of the centralized state, and the creation and evolution of an ideologically important system commonly termed "decorum" by Egyptologists. The relationship of writing to the development of the Egyptian state features most frequently as a topic for discussion and dispute among historians of the early centralized state.[173] All of the experts concur that the initial uses of writing must be

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probably dating to the Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 1938-1759) during the Middle Kingdom period likewise appear to exhibit a religious aspect. Either ancient visitors to the Meidum pyramid or members of a resident priesthood of the cult of the deified king Snofru left a small number of hieratic graffiti on the funerary temple of the pyramid. Egyptians of the Middle Kingdom apparently thought that King Snofru had been the one to construct the Meidum pyramid and its temple.

[172] Peden 2001: 61. Peden writes that the New Kingdom was characterized by a "complex mixture of antiquarianism and piety," and that this mixture is apparent in the renewal of the royal cults of several Old Kingdom rulers, and consequently in the large number of graffiti texts written on the Step Pyramid enclosure of King Djoser.

[173] Unlike in Mesopotamia, writing in Egypt did *not* emerge in a state whose defining characteristic was extensive urbanization (i.e. a proliferation of central places); the city did not play a pivotal role in the development of Egypt (cf. Baines and Yoffee 1998: 208-209; K. Bard 1994: 115 and 1997: 78; F. Hassan 1993: 557-558; M. Hoffman 1979: 309; and R. Wenke 1997: 42). Despite the marked contrast with the "rich urban landscape" of Mesopotamia, Egypt's uneven urbanization did not stunt technological progress or artistic and scientific innovation. According to R. Wenke (1997), this fact shows that cities are not the

understood within the context of the political, administrative, and ideological development of the unified state.[174] Disagreements have arisen, however, over why writing was invented in the context of Predynastic Egypt,[175] and whether writing either drove the formation of the early state or instead enabled it to achieve a certain level of complexity and control not commonly found in states that do not rely on writing. A most convincing case has been made by both J. Baines and K. Bard that writing emerged shortly before or after the unification of the state, and that it participated in the centralization process, although it was not necessary to it.[176]

For later periods of Egyptian history, the question of how writing was used to facilitate the administering of the state has to some degree to be left unresolved due to the lack of surviving state archives.[177] This is ironic considering the fact that the administrative and economic uses of writing undoubtedly prevailed in ancient Egypt;[178] nevertheless, these uses are now not as well attested as the monumental examples of writing thanks to the vagaries of preservation.

The best information regarding administrative and archival practice in ancient Egypt comes from the fourteenth century site of Tel Amarna, where almost 350 small

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sole "mechanisms for encouraging innovation and efficient systems of information processing, storage, and control" (pp. 44-45). In an earlier article, Wenke (1991) observes that Egypt, although a powerful centralized state, nonetheless was "based on thousands of small, largely self-sufficient (in terms of subsistence) communities, with only modest centralization of economic production" (p. 308).

[174] Most of writing's earliest uses in Egypt relate to the administrative sphere, particularly the use of writing to indicate ownership and destination, and to record economic activities. Royal seal impressions, labels, and potmarks bearing hieroglyphs identified goods and materials collected for and by the state. According to Bard (1997), the labels with the names of the First Dynasty (ca. 3000-2800 BCE) kings attached to these goods reveal that there had already been installed a state taxation system by the early dynasties, and that the state controlled large quantities of goods and materials (pp. 59-86).

[175] Some scholars still pursue this question in rather traditional terms, seeking the spark which gave birth to writing in Egypt. Hence theories that writing was invented for the "act of naming graphemically" (W. Fairservis 1983: 12-13), or in order to perpetuate the king's person (P. Vernus 2002: 45), or that it was created by the priests of Thoth at Ashmunein (Hermopolis in Middle Egypt) for their ritualistic practices (J. Ray 1986: 311). Others have dispensed with this fashion of dealing with the earliest attestations of writing, deeming the quest for the "why" of Egyptian writing unhelpful. They instead prefer to assess the various early uses for writing, as witnessed by the archaeological record.

[176] Baines believes that writing emerged soon after the unification of the state (Baines 1988: 192-214), while Bard argues that it first made its appearance shortly before unification (Bard 1994; 1997: 59-86; 2000: 61-88). Both agree, however, that writing did not drive unification; rather, it helped consolidate it.

[177] There are, however, ancient groupings of texts that Egyptologists define as archives. Among these are the set of correspondence of Heqanakht (early Middle Kingdom), the business files of Horemsaf (late Middle Kingdom), and collections of ritual texts (S. Quirke 1996: 379).

[178] According to Baines (1988), the invention of the artificial medium of papyrus within a century or two of writing itself demonstrates the prevalence of administrative and cursive uses of writing over other uses (pp. 195-196).

pillow-shaped tablets of baked clay impressed with cuneiform signs were discovered in the "Store of Documents of Pharaoh."[179] Written chiefly in Akkadian, these documents are diplomatic dispatches issued from the courts of West Asian princes and governors to the Egyptian court at Amarna (ancient Akhetaten).[180] These tablets, with their hieratic dockets, would almost certainly have been kept with archival documents originally.[181] The bulky tablets were probably abandoned at the site when the capital moved, because there were papyrus copies.[182]

Given the short-lived nature of Amarna as the site of the Egyptian court, as well as its anomalous character in Egyptian culture,[183] however, it is difficult to draw conclusions about Egyptian archival practice from this site. Furthermore, there were almost certainly foreign scribes present at the Egyptian court who may have been involved in setting up the system to store these texts. Scholars are still left, therefore, with an extremely limited database for ancient Egyptian archival practice. Egyptian systems of shelving and cataloguing remain a mystery, as do Egyptian methods of storing and referring back to single documents in large groups.[184] Likewise, it is difficult to ascertain the shape of the Egyptian archive because of the lack of data regarding the extent of text production or the number of compositions circulating at any period.[185]

The cognitive aspects of writing in conjunction with the vividly realized monumental reliefs and their accompanying inscriptions have engendered a great deal of

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[179] The Amarna "Store of Documents of Pharaoh" and "House of Life" are the only architecturally attested places of storing texts in Egypt prior to the Ptolemaic period. These storage places are "identified from hieroglyphic labels stamped on bricks in the two respective building complexes west of, and more or less equidistant to, the smaller Aten Temple and the House of the king" (S. Quirke 1996: 394).

[180] There are also at least nine copies or drafts of the letters which the pharaoh sent to his correspondents. See W. Moran 1972: 933-935.

[181] The fact that some of the el-Amarna tablets bear hieratic dockets would suggest that they were to be retrieved on occasion. That the tablets were consulted is also indicated by the fact that texts addressed to Amenhophis III were brought along to the capital founded by Akhenaten (G. Beckman, personal communication).

[182] T. Wilfong, personal communication.

[183] The capital was founded ca. 1350 by Akhenaten, a king who introduced dramatic innovations in Egyptian religion that affected most aspects of Egyptian culture. The capital and Akhenaten's religion were abandoned immediately after his reign.

[184] The New Kingdom period does provide scholars with a few tantalizing glimpses into the world of Egyptian archival practice, however. It appears that no separate records office existed for the royal administration; according to S. Quirke (1999) in his study of Egyptian archives, in the late New Kingdom the different departments possessed their own *st,* "place," in the technical sense of "storeroom," for documents (pp. 395-396).

[185] See Quirke 1996: 370-401.

interest in scholastic circles. As an integral player in Egypt's "enormously powerful complex"[186] of interwoven visual and written compositions known collectively as "decorum,"[187] writing assumed a pivotal role in Egypt's cultural development that is unparalleled in any Mesopotamian or Mediterranean culture. So much so, that writing's role in decorum has superceded any part it played in the Egyptian administration, at least in the imaginations of all those who behold the extensive array of surviving monuments. The special impact of Egyptian writing can be attributed to the uniquely visual qualities of the hieroglyphs – seamlessly entwined with the fully representational images, hieroglyphs representing abstract concepts were worked "as tangible objects into artistic compositions whilst retaining congruity of style."[188]

     Much time and thought have been invested in examining the special characteristics of Egyptian hieroglyphs and their integration with artistic representations. This interest stems not so much from aesthetic considerations (although it is undeniable that the beautiful elegance of the reliefs inspires even the most practical of analyses) as it does from the desire to investigate how the strongly symbolic value of written and pictorial forms enabled the Egyptian elite to elaborate their ideology.[189] The experts appear to be in agreement that the system of decorum offered the Egyptian kings a means to convey a centralized legitimation that presented and defended the king's role as the perpetuator of the fragile order of the cosmos. To this end, the ideology expressed by decorum stressed not only the critical role of the king in maintaining order, but also a "territorial claim of unity" that dominated over geographical subdivisions and the other claims of smaller social and political organizations.

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[186] Baines and Yoffee 1998: 241.

[187] It should be noted that the notion of a system of "decorum" is entirely a modern Egyptological construct. While this system was tacitly understood by the Egyptians, and aspects of it appear in texts (especially instructional literature), there is no explicit articulation of "decorum" in ancient sources. The Egyptians never explicitly explained this concept, except under their larger concept of *ma'at*, variously translated as "order, truth, justice, rightness, etc."

[188] B. Kemp 1989: 27. Cf. also Baines and Yoffee (1998: 241) for writing's special role in creating this ideologically powerful system of decorum. The interdependence of art and writing in ancient Egyptian reliefs is particularly evident in the "decorative uses of hieroglyphs," according to D. Silverman (1990: 37). For example, when a person's name was inscribed on a three-dimensional or two-dimensional representation of the individual, the determinative hieroglyphs (designating that they were a man or a woman) were discarded, and the hieroglyph's place was supplanted by the statue or representation of the owner. In addition, hieroglyphs became "functioning elements of other objects" (e.g. the *ankh*, *was*, and *djed*) (p. 37).

[189] Cf. Kemp 1989: Chapter 1; Baines and Yoffee 1998: 199-260; and D. O'Connor 1997: 13-24.

The expression of decorum by Egyptian kings was not confined to voicing an ideological position about the present: it also enabled them to communicate an ideological vision of the past. Together, artistic and written compositions were formulated to suggest the continuity of the prevailing regime with the past. The use of writing in particular to exploit the past for ideological purposes, remarked upon by several scholars, is a significant and consistent phenomenon throughout Egyptian history.[190] Egyptian kings defined the absolute past in order to legitimize their present – they harkened back to earlier events or texts and observed the cults of deified kings to substantiate their position in the eyes of their elite subjects and of the gods.[191]

The witness of the surviving tombs reveals that the Egyptian elites as well as rulers used the system of decorum and the attendant practice of harkening back to the past to exploit their wealth and thereby procure legitimacy.[192] Within the larger context of an article offering a comparative analysis of the development of the ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian states, Baines and Yoffee have examined from an anthropological perspective how elites in both of these ancient states actively legitimized inequality and appropriated order.[193] They maintain that the desire of the elites to create more wealth led them to transform the meaning of wealth by controlling symbolic

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[190] Cf. Baines 1983: 572-599; Eyre 1996: 415-433; and Kemp 1989: Chapter 1. Baines terms this phenomenon "archaism." According to Baines, such uses of writing can be included in the category of "history" for ancient Egypt. He hastens to add, however, that this type of history is not discursive or analytic (p. 588).

[191] From the very beginning of writing's monumental use, the Egyptian kings and elite evidently had conceived a desire to define the absolute past in order to commemorate, monumentalize, and hence legitimize their positions. Baines in particular has traced the roots of the Egyptians' wish to define the absolute past to the Early Dynastic period (ca. 3000-2625 BCE), beginning with the phenomenon of written "commemoration" on stone vases. The most massive example of the phenomenon of "commemoration," according to Baines, is the Step Pyramid of Djoser as well as what lay underneath this pyramid: numerous underground galleries yielded tens of thousands of stone vases, many bearing the names of First and Second Dynasty kings. What was involved, suggests Baines, was "some sort of *pietas* … such as the provision for the mortuary cult" (1989: 134). This "ancestral" material may have served to legitimate the king's position as well as his expropriation of labor for constructing the pyramid.

[192] From the very earliest periods, writing's use in funerary art found in tombs (such as the Early Dynastic tombs at Abydos and Saqqara) helped express the ideologies of royalty and the elite in Upper Egypt (Bard 1992: 1-24; 1994: especially pp. 5-6). The production of elaborate craft goods probably enabled the newly unified state to convey its ideological message through the complex symbolism and iconography carved and inscribed on such goods as the famous Narmer Palette. Moreover, it was in the period of the Dynasties 0-2 that "burial and the realm of the dead consolidated their position as a principal mode of display and signification, as well as a consumer of resources" (Baines and Yoffee 1998: 218).

[193] Baines and Yoffee, "Order, Legitimacy, and Wealth in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia" (1998: 199-260). They note that the issue of order was a particularly important one in both of these early civilizations, as both were characterized by "their rapidity of formation and relative instability" (p. 212).

resources "in such a way as to make them meaningful only when it was they who exploit[ed] them."[194] These elites also formulated a religious affirmation of their activities by asserting that it was only through these actions that the cosmic order was maintained. As "the principal human protagonists and prime communicants to the deities who are the supreme members of the total society," write Baines and Yoffee, elites "require the highest products of culture."[195]

Other experts, also writing from an anthropological perspective, have chosen to take a more positive view of the part played by writing in this system of decorum, preferring to stress how writing served to perform important stabilizing social functions. This emphasis leads Egyptologists like D. O'Connor and D. Silverman to focus more closely on Egyptian attitudes to writing as expressed in mortuary inscriptions. According to Silverman, magical significance was accorded the writing down of something in hieroglyphs: "if it was recorded, then it happened as it had been written," he notes.[196] One extension of writing's magical function was its use in ensuring and maintaining the afterlife through the rendering of prayers for offerings to be made, spells for proper behavior, and incantations for the knowledge that was needed after death; these texts were placed with the deceased. This particular attitude towards writing appears to be at play not only in the sophisticated literary compositions inscribed on the walls of Old Kingdom royal tombs (known as the Pyramid Texts),[197] but also in some of the earliest examples of graffiti, which date to the late Fifth or early Sixth Dynasty (ca. 2350 BCE).[198]

O'Connor likewise stresses the transformative power of Egyptian art and text: the Egyptians believed that together, art and writing were "ritually and magically empowered

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[194] *Ibid*, 234.

[195] *Ibid*, 234-235. Baines and Yoffee therefore identify what they term "high culture" as "the essential locus, in which order exploits wealth for legitimacy. They define high cultures as "the production and consumption of aesthetic items under the control, and for the benefit, of the inner elite of a civilization, including the ruler and the gods" (p. 235).

[196] Silverman 1990: 28. According to Silverman, the Egyptians also viewed the ability to write as divine in origin; they called the hieroglyphs *medou netcher*, meaning "gods' words."

[197] Old Kingdom royalty had the Pyramid Texts inscribed on the walls of their tombs; these were composed in Old Egyptian and written in hieroglyphs. By the end of the Old Kingdom, private individuals of the upper classes likewise assembled collections of spells known as the Coffin Texts. These texts, written in either hieroglyphs or the cursive hieratic, were carved on the insides of their coffins from the late First Intermediate through the Middle Kingdom periods (Silverman 1990: 28-29).

[198] These graffiti, consisting of the names and titles of temple personnel, were scratched on the paving stones of two rooms at the entrance to the pyramid-temple of King Djedkare Isesi at Saqqara.

to literally transform contexts (temples, tombs, palaces and others) into cosmically charged settings that reflect the belief that the activities carried out in them were effective beyond the human realm."[199] He emphasizes in particular how writing functioned to reflect and transform social structure by communicating not only information, but also the place of each social component (deities, the dead, and the living) in the cosmos and society, along with "what relationships of subordination, fair dealing and respectful obedience tie them together."[200] While counterbalancing the more negative assessments of what essentially motivated the creation of funerary (as well as temple and palace) inscriptions, the analyses of these two Egyptologists still essentially neglect the fact that these representations were the products not of Egyptian society in general, but only a small segment of Egyptian elites. What the ideologies of the majority of the Egyptians were remains a mystery.

The primary point of disagreement among experts analyzing the ideological significance of the system of decorum concerns the propagandistic role writing (together with art) was called on to play in royal and ritual monumental inscriptions. More specifically, opinion is sharply divided over the intended audience of this propaganda. Many scholars assume that these inscriptions are geared towards communicating to a wide range of people a certain perspective about the order of the cosmos and about the ruler and elites' role in maintaining that order. It has already been observed above how Silverman and O'Connor do not distinguish between the elite producers of artistic inscriptions and the rest of the Egyptian population who had little or no visible means of expressing their own ideologies; likewise, they also seem to take for granted that virtually all Egyptians would have formed an audience for the ideologically-driven messages of these inscriptions.

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[199] O'Connor 1997: 17-18). Baines (1996) on the other hand criticizes the tendency widespread in the literature (illustrated in this quote of O'Connor's) to attribute a "literal magical or re-creative function" to royal and ritual reliefs, calling this interpretation "problematic." He believes that these works at most can be viewed as "performative," in that "By their existence they enact a communication or, in the case of ritual reliefs in temples, an action, so that they are self-sufficient" (p. 351).

[200] O'Connor 1997: 17. According to O'Connor, funerary art accomplished this by expressing the attitudes and benefits among this grouping of divine, dead, and living recipients and donors: the deities take satisfaction from the Egyptians' observance of order, while the Egyptians are contented by the positive responses of the deities.

B. Bryan has offered a more insightful hypothesis regarding the issue of audience that pays close attention to the web of possible meanings woven by the close integration of art and text on artistic monumental inscriptions.[201] Bryan proposes that Egyptian monuments were designed to speak to all segments of Egyptian society with a unified voice, but also with a variety of potential meanings: she contends that discrete elements of an image or a scene may have communicated with different audiences of the ancient Egyptian population, depending on their level of literacy (or illiteracy, as the case might be).[202] According to Bryan, through the design and production of monumental works of art like propagandistic battle reliefs, the state could reach a large proportion of the Egyptian population on a multitude of levels.   Her hypothesis provides a creative explanation for the unique character of the Egyptians' monumental inscriptions, but it encounters difficulties when the spatial context of these inscriptions is taken into consideration (see below).

D. Redford argues the most ardently for the broad dissemination of public texts;[203] he contends that the dissemination expected to accompany the distribution of royal stelae and government degrees would have been impossible to accomplish without public readings: "Publicly displayed royal inscriptions expect an *audience*, not a readership," he maintains.[204] As evidence, he cites the content of the genre of inscription known as the "Call to the Living" and found in tombs. The deceased in some of these addresses desire the passersby to "recite," "to say with your mouths," and "to pronounce" the words of his appeal. Here he claims to find direct evidence that the device of reading aloud was used to disseminate a written text among the illiterate population. Baines and Eyre, however, urge caution in understanding these offering formulae as intended for a

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[201] Bryan 1995: 28-29.
[202] As an example, Bryan points to the image of a seated-pair statue.   The depiction alone of this image might convey a markedly different impression than that image with all of its accompanying inscriptions and prayers. The perception of the viewer in question was the variable factor; the monument was fashioned so that a viewer, depending on their level of literacy, could appreciate the two human figures by themselves, the figures and the simple *htp di nsw* formula provided for the viewer, or both of these plus long and perhaps complicated texts with administrative titles, family genealogy, and biographical narrative. For each of these cases, the object in question could be perceived in a variety of ways.
[203] Redford 2000: 145-218.
[204] *Ibid*, 162.

broad audience, since they are either addressed to specific people or are quite vague as to their intended audience.[205]

In an earlier article, Baines and Eyre had observed (anticipating Redford) that public proclamations of kings' deeds may indeed have been a means for disseminating royal propaganda to a wider audience, but they were more cautious in their assessments of the evidence for this practice. There is some very limited evidence that the texts of treaties could occasionally be read aloud in public settings, and that royal inscriptions may have been set up in duplicates in numerous temples. But the reading aloud of royal texts is not well attested, and the record of the existence of duplicates is generally poor.[206]

Baines, writing alone or with Eyre or Yoffee, has raised further objections concerning the theory of Redford and others that monumental inscriptions were intended for a general audience. These experts point to the physical inaccessibility of these texts,[207] and to the strong Egyptian tendency of restricting the transmission of writing, particularly during the period of the Old Kingdom.[208] These observations lead them to conclude that the intended readership of many public texts was a small group of the ancient Egyptian elite and not the Egyptians in general.[209] The aim of this propaganda was mainly leveled at mobilizing the past in ways that probably would have been

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[205] Baines and Eyre 1983: 65-96. While some are addressed to everybody, most single out priestly personnel and scribes.

[206] See Baines 1996: 347.

[207] Cf. Baines and Eyre 1983:72; Baines 1996:347; and Baines and Yoffee 1998: 242. These monumental and mortuary stelae were typically set up in deserts far from settlements and in temples only accessible to priests; moreover, they were usually physically difficult to read (too high on a wall, etc.). A good example is the hieroglyphic inscription containing the annals of Thutmosis III (ca. 1479-1425 BCE) in the temple of Amon-Re at Karnak. The text is situated in the base area of the north wall by the barque shrine in the heart of the temple, so it could (in theory) be read. As Baines observes, however, very few people could read hieroglyphs, and only officiants in temple rituals would have had access to the room containing the inscriptions. Furthermore, the manner in which the inscription is placed on the wall in conjunction with the art reveals that the legitimizing and propagandistic meaning of the artistic work derives from its connection with a continuing artistic tradition (Baines 1996: 353).

[208] See Baines and Eyre 1983: 65-67, and Baines and Yoffee 1998: 241-242.

[209] "Rather," argue Baines and Yoffee (1998), these texts "addressed society in the widest sense, which included the gods and the dead; their creation was a focus of elite interest and discourse; and they related to a broader past and future" (p. 242). The same holds true even for stelae, despite the fact that (unlike temple inscriptions) these "are iconographically self-contained and by implication could have stood in more public places" (Baines 1996: 353). Even for these royal inscriptions, however, there is every indication that the speeches they contain demonstrate the existence of a "tightly defined repertory" and thus comprise part of a "compact tradition" – these texts were still directed primarily to the elite, and did not necessarily spread their message to large numbers of people (*ibid*, 354).

unintelligible to the majority of the population, who were outside the literate culture.[210]

Although the monuments may *not* have been designed primarily to persuade most sectors of society, this does not mean that efforts were not made to disseminate a royal and elite ideology, only that this was done "orally or visually, through speech, performance, and architecture."[211] Needless to say, oral methods of persuasion leave little trace, and architectural methods provide no specific information apart from their solid presence as to their intended audience.

A final characteristic of the discourse on Egyptian literacy treated here pertains to the tendency in scholarship to subordinate oral forms of discourse to written forms. Because much of what is known about Egyptian history and culture derives from the plethora of texts the Egyptians produced, Egyptologists have tended to place undo emphasis on the importance of writing to the Egyptians, ignoring the likelihood that most lines of communication and transmission, whether of messages, announcements, or even ideas, were oral and not written. Oral discourse by its very nature cannot become an artifact like writing can, and it is therefore easy to overlook this quintessential facet of ancient Egyptian society. Many forms of content were probably passed on orally – royal doings, the invocation of the names in official cults in order to preserve the memory of a person, the powerful acts of the gods, the doings and speeches of the people.[212]

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[210] The segregated character of literate culture in Egypt is well illustrated by the development of a special language (known as Middle Egyptian) for the composition of literary texts. Middle Egyptian was distinguished by a high degree of artificiality which set it apart from the labeling-accounting style of written language in the Old Kingdom documents and tombs (see Baines 1992: 335-336; Eyre 1993: 118).

[211] Baines 1996: 358. There are a few indications of the kind of efforts made to disseminate a royal and elite ideology among the more general populace. The phenomenon of eulogies performed orally for the deceased as well as for the king appears to be attested in the contents of non-royal biographies, for example. Moreover, C. Eyre (1996) has observed that when a new king came to the throne, he would send out messengers with a letter that they read publicly throughout Egypt. The scarabs of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390-1353) offer an intriguing "overlap between public announcement and the publication of more literary forms", according to Eyre (p. 427). Assuming the shape of a news bulletin, these scarabs may have been mass produced and then distributed widely, as they are quite common. One may speculate as to the intended recipients of these scarabs; because they are inscribed, they were probably meant primarily to persuade elite members of Egyptian society throughout Egypt. Yet because they were mass produced, their contents surely would have trickled down to other sectors of the population. In general, however, it seems clear that the bulk of the propaganda issued by the Egyptian king and elite class was destined for the eyes and ears of a select group of Egyptian noteworthies, and that few opportunities for public communication and the dissemination of information were sought by those engaged in formulating this propaganda.

[212] Redford 2000: 145-218. In Redford's essay, he expends considerable effort to unearth evidence of a "vibrant" oral discourse that he believes flourished in Egypt among both the illiterate and the elite classes.

Among the scribes and elite, orality flourished in certain aspects of educative and literary practice. Scholars have often noted how reliant the educative process in ancient Egypt was on oral methods of instruction.[213] Eyre and Baines write that in the context of elementary education, "writing, reading, and reciting were … closely connected from the beginning … all written texts were also heard."[214] In regard to reading habits, even the most highly literary texts were destined to be recited in oral performance, sometimes even from memory.[215] In an essay on Egyptian historical literature, Eyre contends that the individual "historical" inscription not only takes its style from rhetorical performance, but may at times have been performed itself.[216]

Despite the incorporation of oral discourse into educative and literary practice, however, there was a pervasive and often conscious disjunction of the oral from the written in the attitudes of the scribes towards oral discourse, as well as in the manner in which writing related to the spoken language. Redford has shown that the archival mentality of scribal discourse in ancient Egypt presented itself as completely antithetical to the oral tradition, even setting about "actively to denigrate oral composition and transmission."[217] He identifies three categories of oral tradition in Egyptian written texts – formulae, poetry, and stories – that he argues were represented in the oral tradition of ancient Egypt. The authors of the texts in these categories were "marginalized" and their texts considered unscholarly, according to Redford.

The disjunction of the oral from the written discourse in ancient Egypt also encompassed the extent to which writing represented language, and the relation of writing to the contemporaneous spoken language. At the beginning of Egyptian writing, full syntactic forms of the language were not expressed by either the hieroglyphic form of writing used in works of art, or the cursive form used for administration – writing was a

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[213] See, for example, Eyre and Baines 1989: 91-120; E. Wente 1995: 2211-2221.

[214] Eyre and Baines 1989: 94-95.

[215] Eyre and Baines make this observation in their article cited above, while at the same time emphasizing the written character of all Egyptian literary classics. Against theories of "oral formulaic" poetry, they argue that the presence of formulae in these classics can be accounted for by the reading process because such formulae are "fundamental to much reading, and much written composition," in addition to being helpful in oral performance (1989: 112). Thus they conclude that the Egyptian literary classics were *not* originally oral performances later crystallized into written form.

[216] Eyre 1996: 415-433. See also a similar discussion in Eyre's contribution to the Sixth International Congress of Egyptologists (1993: 115-120).

[217] Redford 2000: 145.

helpful aid to the administration without encoding full syntactic forms, and in art works it simply provided captions and was not required for continuous texts.[218] Even when it came to be used for continuous texts during the Old Kingdom period, writing was restricted to particular dialects and standardized forms, and came under writing conventions.[219] Later in Egyptian history, the written language became even more distanced from the vernacular. The language used to write down Middle Egyptian literature was "a sort of 'Homeric' dialect," according to Eyre; never a vernacular, it was always a "formalized 'poetic' language."[220] The divergence of the written from the spoken language received additional impetus from the prominence of the New Kingdom institution of the "house of life," which encouraged writing to become the preserve of an elite culture.[221]

To conclude: the importance of the oral underpinnings of everyday social communication and interaction in ancient Egypt must not be discounted in any assessment of the modes of communication; at the same time, it is at least equally critical to acknowledge the important role that writing played in Egyptian cultural self-definition (at least in the self-definition of the elite). The unique function of writing in Egypt can best be illustrated by an example cited by Redford, namely, the Egyptians' stress on the importance of a written foundation for any human activity or speech. The source of the great authority of these texts was not only antiquity, but also authorship, whether human or divine. In some texts wherein the author identifies himself, he conveys a sense of playing a part in a "long, unbroken line of scribes, as a candidate for 'ancestral' status one day."[222] By the Ramesside period (ca. 1292-1075 BCE), some literary texts even placed a higher value on the written works of scribes than on the extraordinarily elaborate and important Egyptian provision for burial; these texts aver that the tombs of past sages may eventually disappear, but that their works, which can be read by later scribes, preserve their wisdom forever – "all but writing decays."[223]

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[218] Baines and Yoffee 1998: 241.
[219] Baines 1992: 333-337.
[220] Eyre 1993: 118. See also Baines 1983: 581.
[221] Baines 1983: 581. The "house of life" was "a scriptorium attached to temples where traditional texts were both copied and studied," writes Baines.
[222] Redford 2000: 168.
[223] Baines 1989: 143.

Literacy and Writing in Ancient Mesopotamia and Along Its Western Periphery

It is no coincidence that studies of writing and literacy in ancient Mesopotamia concentrate primarily on the scribal cadre and its written legacy, just as equivalent studies do in ancient Egypt. It is well known that ancient Mesopotamia, like ancient Egypt, cultivated a class of highly literate individuals whose written productions (whether literary texts, royal inscriptions, economic records, or even letters) have provided scholars with the bulk of their information about Mesopotamian culture, history, and thought. Those economic and administrative activities not recorded by the literate, those thoughts and ideologies not presented by them in texts, those voices raised in opposition to the status quo, have all disappeared over the long millennia, thanks to their failure to become immortalized by the written word. For better or for worse, a minority of the inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia (as well as of Egypt) generated the most lasting legacy for the entirety of the Mesopotamian population.

It is in particular the scribal *literary* legacy that has long inspired and energized discussions of literate activity in Mesopotamia. The earliest excavations in the Mesopotamian region, launched in the nineteenth century of this era, unearthed the physical remains of a rich literary tradition in the form of cuneiform clay tablets. Although thousands upon thousands of more prosaic types of texts, such as those pertaining to economic and administrative matters, were discovered at the same time, they at first did not hold the same interest for early excavators. These biblically and classically trained excavators were by-and-large focused on searching for the roots of biblical literature and an underlying civilization with a middle eastern legacy that would rival the one which had emerged in the ancient western world, i.e. in Greece and Rome.

Nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars therefore occupied themselves with tracing the development of such Babylonian literary masterpieces as Atrahasis and Enuma Eliš, as well as with sketching the role of the scribes in the development and maintenance of the Mesopotamian literary tradition. Other types of documents received rather cursory treatments as attestations of the scribes' more pragmatic, practical writing activity (with somewhat more attention paid to those tablets thought to represent school texts used in the training of future scribes). In the latter half of the twentieth century, and particularly in the last twenty-five years or so, the value of studying other types of texts

and of conducting other kinds of analyses has increasingly come to be recognized as critical for reconstructing a more complete picture of scribal literate activity in Mesopotamia.

Although there is as yet no full-scale, comprehensive study of Mesopotamian literacy (as discussed in the introduction to this chapter), recent trends in the study of Mesopotamian scribes and their written productions are steadily building the foundation for such an endeavor. Studies have recently appeared providing insights into (1) the part played by scribes and their written productions in the emergence and development of the state, (2) the context(s) of Mesopotamian writing activity, (3) the uses to which writing was put in ancient Mesopotamia, (4) the ways in which Mesopotamian scribes collected and stored certain categories of documents, (5) the role of these scribes in Mesopotamian society and culture, and finally, (6) the transmission of Mesopotamian literacy and writing conventions to regions within Mesopotamia's influential orbit as well as the interaction between Mesopotamian literacy and local forms of communication and written expression.

These six points will each be taken up in detail because they provide an ANE reference point for the interpretation of the Levantine data vis-à-vis scribes, their social status, and their role in the development of the ethnicizing states of the Levant; scribal activity and the participation of scribes in the transmission of texts; and the question of archives (if and how documents were stored in Judah and other Levantine states). A thorough treatment of the last point in particular provides a Middle Bronze and Late Bronze historical context for the development of literacy and writing in later periods in the Levant.

(1) Writing, Scribes, and the Emergence and Development of the State in Mesopotamia

From the southern Mesopotamian city of Uruk (ancient Warka) have come more than five thousand of the earliest written texts discovered by archaeologists. It is generally conceded by historians, therefore, that the origins of writing can be traced back to the Uruk III and Jemdet Nasr periods (ca. 3100-2900 BCE), during which time the early cities in southern Mesopotamia first burgeoned into city-states with increasingly centralized bureaucracies. The consensus falters, however, when it comes to the

interrelated questions of how and why writing developed, and what kind of role writing played in the emergence and development of the early Mesopotamian city-state.

The majority of scholars believe that the proto-cuneiform writing system, from its inception, was intended to serve as an accounting system, and that it was designed above all to record administrative data. As proof, scholars typically single out the fact that administrative accounts represent the majority (eighty-five percent) of the earliest texts from Uruk,[224] and that by far the greatest number of texts dating to all periods of Mesopotamian history are administrative and economic in nature. Here again however, opinions diverge as to whether the development of writing should be understood as an evolutionary process or as a discrete invention, and whether writing represented the inevitable response to the needs of the Mesopotamian bureaucracy.

One school of thought describes the development of writing as an evolutionary process and views this process as necessitated by the growth of complex bureaucratic structures.[225] The development of writing is understood primarily as the evolution of a new, more efficient technology which bettered its predecessors as a tool for efficiently conveying information. The evolutionary process is thought to have taken place in one of two ways. According to some experts, the appearance of true writing was preceded by a set of precursors consisting of documents exhibiting more primitive symbols.[226] According to others, the development of writing as an evolutionary process followed a somewhat different path. Writing, as an efficient method of storing information and preserving memory, evolved conceptually from more primitive ways of storing

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[224] R. Englund 1998: 15-233. The other fifteen percent of the archaic texts from Uruk are comprised of the so-called lexical lists, and even these lists consist (with one exception) of "simple lists of semantically related words, such as lists of domestic animals, of professional names, and so on" (pp. 65-66).

[225] For this view, see J. Bottero 1992: Chapter 5 (especially p. 70); M. Green 1981:345-372; H. Nissen 2003: 11-20 and 1986: 317-334; M. Nissen, P. Damerow, and R. Englund 1993: Chapter 5 (pp. 19-24), A. Leo Oppenheim 1975: 37-46; and D. Schmandt-Besserat 1995: 2097-2106, 1994: 13-28, 1992, 1986: 32-39, 1977: 1-32.

[226] Cf. J. Bottero 1992: 70; A. Kuhrt 1995: 23; M. Larsen 1989: 121-148; and R. Sweet 1997: 35-41. According to this view, the pictographic drawings on clay tablets were followed by an application of the rebus principle ("sun" for "son") which resulted in phonetization. Those researchers who posit pictographic precursors to proto-cuneiform at Uruk around 3100 BCE have believed their view to be confirmed by the evidence for an early ideographic system dating to the period shortly before the emergence of writing (the Uruk IV period, ca. 3200-3100 BCE). This ideographic system does indeed appear to be highly developed and conventionalized, but it does not represent a true pictographic precursor to proto-cuneiform (Englund 1998: 42).

information, according to these experts.[227] The invention of writing at the end of the fourth millennium is therefore understood as one in a series of technological developments which took place within the growing bureaucratic system. In its beginning stages, writing may have not been unique in its function, but in comparison with other types of technologies used for recording purposes, it offered "greater flexibility and sophistication."[228]

The second main school of thought regarding the development of writing and the emergence of the state agrees with proponents of the evolutionary model that the rise of the complex state is somehow linked to the use of writing, but they tend to believe that the exact nature of the relationship between the two phenomena will be obscure forever.[229] On the surface, the difference between the two schools seems slight, as historians of both schools contend that this new system of record keeping and communication enabled the administration of Uruk to administer better a rapidly growing economy.

Where this second school differs is in its emphasis on cuneiform writing as a product of invention[230] and as a self-contained and "coherent system of information

[227] Cf. especially M. Nissen 1986: 317-334, M. Nissen, P. Damerow, and R. Englund 1993, J. Postgate 1984: 4-18; M. Powell 1981: 419-440; D. Schmandt-Besserat 1995: 2097-2106, 1994: 13-28, 1992, 1986: 32-39, and 1977: 1-32; and, to a certain extent, R. Englund 1998: 15-233.
[228] S. Pollock 1992: 297-336 (quote found on p. 321). Those who subscribe to this conceptual and linear evolutionary process for the development of writing tend to identify the numerous clay tokens that have been discovered in most regions of the Near East from 8000 BCE onwards as the precursors to writing. As argued by D. Schmandt-Besserat, the primary formulator of this theory, these clay tokens were counters used for keeping track of commodities for several thousand years before they finally developed into the first script (1995: 2102. Cf. also Schmandt-Besserat 1992, 1986: 32-39 and 1977: 1-32). The first pictographs were actually the impressions or drawings of signs in the form of the former tokens. Schmandt-Besserat describes these tokens as a technology that changed society, as did the later emergence of writing, the token system *par excellence*, during the Late Uruk period (1992: 195). Others who associate the appearance of writing with the rise of the city-state in Mesopotamia nonetheless dismiss Schmandt-Besserat's "token" theory on several grounds. At Uruk, the tokens and their envelope bullae have not been found in their original archaeological context, which makes it difficult to evaluate the true function of these objects; some of them may not have even been linked to accounting (Englund 1998: 47; S. Jasim and J. Oates, 1986: 348-362; and Michalowski 1994: 54-55). Furthermore, the majority of the token repertoire has been discovered in levels dating to the same time as or even later than those containing the archaic tablets; this recording system (clay envelopes plus calculi) continued in use into the second millennium (Jasim and Oates 1986: 348-362). These latter two facts appear to suggest that the token system may have merely functioned as an alternative recording system rather than a proto-writing system.
[229] Cf. Damerow 1999: 1-18; Englund 1998: 15-233; Fissore 1994: 339-354; Michalowski 2003: 451-478 and 1994: 49-70.
[230] The scholars of this school agree with M. Powell's assessment that the invention of writing was a conscious invention for a deliberate purpose (possibly even by one inventor, Powell's *homo literatus*

manipulation" from its inception.[231] Michalowski states this case most strongly when he

contends that there were in fact no "evolutionary precursors" to the proto-cuneiform

system, and that writing as a "completely new invention" was developed as a complete

system.[232] The historians of this school also tend to downplay the significance of writing

for the development of the state, because they take a less deterministic view of writing as

a technology. According to these scholars, writing as a technology does not always

interact with the culture in which it appears in the same way – its effects are not

universal. Writing must be understood neither as the motivating force for the rise of the

city-state, nor as the inevitable outcome of the needs of a growing bureaucracy; rather, it

is an enabling factor.[233]

     Since the technology of writing does not have the same effects in every culture,

the social environment in which writing developed must also be taken into consideration

as having a great deal of influence over what was written down and how it was written

down.[234] Writing's potential as a controlling device seems to have been pursued

vigorously in Mesopotamia,[235] and its initially restricted context of application (to

conveying information centering on administrative activities) apparently even influenced

its formal structure.[236] For the historians subscribing to this school, the invention of

proto-cuneiform writing was only "the last step in a long tradition of developing pre-

historic means of administration."[237] In other words, the appearance of writing did not

occur in a vacuum; rather, writing emerged in a context in which alternative recording

systems were also in use, and borrowed elements from these systems.[238]

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sumericus Urukeus). Cf. Baines and Yoffee 1998: 215, Englund 1998: 73, Michalowski 1994: 55, and
Vanstiphout 1995: 2181-2196, especially p. 2184.

[231] M. Green 1981: 345.

[232] Michalowski 1994: 49-70, esp. p. 55.

[233] M. Larsen 1988: 173-191, esp. p. 187. Cf. Englund 1998: 15-233, especially p. 213.

[234] Damerow 1999: 1-18, p. 13.

[235] Larsen 1988: 173-191

[236] Damerow 1999: 13.

[237] *Ibid*, 14.

[238] Cf. especially Damerow 1998: 1-18; Englund 1998: 15-233; Fissore 1994: 339-354; Jasim and Oates
1986: 348-362; and Vanstiphout 1995: 2181-2196. The accounting offices of the emerging urban centers
of the fourth millennium BCE included among their "increasingly involved administrative tools" stamp and
cylinder seals as well as counting devices ("tokens") and clay tablets (Englund 1998: 42). "Writing
introduces a further ability to analyze information," writes Fissore, "but certainly not a revolutionary
system for processing data" (Fissore 1994: 339). Fissore observes that for a long span of time and in a
large geographical area, control was exerted over warehouses through the use of clay sealings, which were
in no way subordinated to writing even after writing appeared. Conversely, writing was typically forced to

(2) The Context(s) of Mesopotamian Writing Activity

Studies of literate activity in Mesopotamia that deal wholly or in part with the context for this activity have demonstrated that Mesopotamian scribes, like their Egyptian counterparts, appear to have been almost exclusively engaged in serving the administrative needs of palace and temple bureaucracies. From the time writing first emerged in the southern Mesopotamian city of Uruk sometime around 3100 BCE, the writing skills of literate individuals were harnessed to document certain economic transactions of the Urukean bureaucracy. The thousands upon thousands of economic and administrative texts produced by various bureaucracies throughout the next two and a half millennia in Assyria and Babylonia, as well as the numerous references in official records of rations and property received by scribes for services rendered, testify to the critical role played by scribes in administering the Mesopotamian state. The palace and temple complexes even served as contexts for the compilation of a literary corpus: from the end of the second millennium and during the entire first millennium, scribes of the Assyrian and Babylonian palaces and temples collected and edited many of the Sumerian literary compositions which had been written in earlier periods.[239]

The palace and temple complexes were not the only spheres in which writing activities took place. Assyrian merchants during the Old Assyrian period (ca. 2000-1500 BCE) documented their financial transactions, preserved their private correspondence, and stored all of these documents in their private archives in the Assyrian trading colony of Kaniš (the modern ruin of Kültepe) in central Anatolia.[240] While some scholars have posited that independent institutions in locations dedicated to instruction existed in the third millennium (but disappeared by the middle of the second millennium), most scholars now believe that education took place within the private homes of scholars and

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adapt itself to the older organizational systems and to take on the "pre-constituted formalities" of those systems.

[239] Michalowski 1995: 2279-2291. The earliest narrative and poetic texts date to the latter part of the Early Dynastic period (ca. 2500 BCE). During the late period of Mesopotamian civilization (including the Neo-Babylonian, Achaemenid, and Hellenistic periods), the temple rather than the palace came to be the main center of knowledge and scholarly activities (see G. de Breucker 2003: 13-23).

[240] Thus far, archaeologists have uncovered around 20,000 Old Assyrian cuneiform tablets (most dating to the nineteenth century) at the site of the ancient city of Kaniš (Kültepe) in central Anatolia. See K. Veenhof 2003: 78-123 and C. Michel (2001).

scribes throughout many of the periods of Mesopotamian history, and not in official training institutions.[241] Significant on this score are the numerous tablets of school exercises, including copies of lexical lists and literary works, that have been unearthed in private homes. This archaeological evidence suggests that scholars simply taught young scribes in their own homes, beginning with their own children. The scribal profession tended to be hereditary, and scribal training was through apprenticeship.[242]

(3) The Uses of Writing in Mesopotamia

Thanks to the role of the scribes as the creators and the guardians of the Mesopotamian literary tradition, it is the education and training of these individuals that has long dominated the discussion on the uses of writing in ancient Mesopotamia. Some of the earliest examples of cuneiform writing (dating to the early Uruk III period, ca. 3100 BCE) are school exercises comprised of lists and paradigms – "multiple duplicates of thematic lists of words," in the words of one scholar.[243] Writing instruction was accomplished through the copying down of such lists, although most of the instruction was very likely oral.[244] These lexical lists were above all about writing, and not about the

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[241] Cf. D. Charpin 2002: 36-43; M. Civil 1992: 301-305; P. Michalowski 1995: 2279-2291; S. Tinney 1998: 40-50; K. Veenhof 1986: 1-36; and N. Veldhuis 1999: 101-118. Many scholars believe that many third millennium cities contained an institution devoted to the education of future scribes and scholars known in Sumerian as the É-DUB-BA-(A), "tablet house" (cf. S. Kramer 1990: 31-44; R. Sweet 1990: 99-107; and M. E. Vogelzang 1995: 17-28). Organized something like a company of craftsmen, the scribal school was headed by the *Ummia* (*ummanu* in Akkadian), the "specialist," "expert." However, as Civil (1992: 301-305) has observed in his study of education in Mesopotamia, there is some ambiguity in the use of the Sumerian term for "school" (Eduba). This term also served as a designation for an administrative center or archive. The signs used to write this term can be read É-KIŚIB-BA, "house of the seal" or "of the sealed documents." Such ambiguity "makes it very difficult to identify references to schools proper in economic texts" (p. 303). Practically all of the archaeological sites in Mesopotamia have produced tablets of school exercises; however, archaeologists have not as yet been able to identify with certainty any building that was exclusively devoted to teaching. This explains why Michalowski believes that the Eduba, rather than being a specific location, instead served as a general term for the scribal/bureaucratic schooling undergone by middle and lower-level future bureaucrats in the private homes of priests and scholars (see below).
[242] Charpin 2002: 40. The context of scribal schools did change over time; by the first millennium, priests owned private libraries and schools were affiliated with temples (Baines and Yoffee 1998: 247-248).
[243] Michalowski 2003: 451. These lists make up around fifteen percent of the earliest texts from Uruk. See also Civil 1992: 301-305. There is evidence for these lists from the early Uruk III period (ca. 3100 BCE) to about 1700 BCE; similar lists are attested down through the first millennium. The main reason why scholars believe the lists to have been used in scribal training throughout a period of over 800 years is that they were copied continually throughout the third millennium (cf. Nissen, Damerow, and Englund 1993: 105-109 and Veldhuis 1999: 101-118).
[244] Michalowski 2003: 451. The discovery of concentrations of school texts in certain archaeological levels is due to one of the three most common destinies reserved for such tablets: to the immediately preceding

lists of objects. In other words, the writing system itself was the subject for the Mesopotamians: "The lists not merely record the writing system as it was used. They analyze it from various angles and in a theoretical way."[245] After the advent of literature in Mesopotamia, the curriculum of the scribal schools also came to include literary texts, such as those discovered at Ur and Nippur and dating to the Old Babylonian period (ca. 2000-1500 BCE).[246]

Only within the last several decades has scholarly interest been piqued by the information potentially to be gained about more prosaic types of ancient Mesopotamian activity from analyses of other written productions such as inscribed seals,[247] administrative documents, and economic texts. Given that the Mesopotamians used writing predominantly for inscribing economic and administrative texts, studying such texts opens up numerous windows into the day-to-day functioning of Mesopotamian society. Unfortunately, these texts display a "systematic bias": they are not evenly distributed across different historical periods, and most of them deal with long-distance trade.[248] For example, for pre-Sargonic Lagash, the texts come primarily from temple archives, whereas for the Ur III period, they come almost exclusively from the royal

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destruction or abandonment of buildings in which they were housed, or to the secondary use of these tablets, or to their disposal far away from their original place of storage (see X. Faivre 1995: 57-66).
[245] Veldhuis 1999: 111.
[246] See Michalowski 1995: 2279-2291 and S. Tinney 1998: 40-50. The preservation of exercise tablets at Ur is probably due to the violent destruction of that city in 1722 BCE; in Nippur, excavators have discovered the major part of the Old Babylonian school curriculum from the time of King Samsu-iluna of Babylon (ca. 1749-1712 BCE), after which Nippur was abandoned for several centuries.
[247] The ancient Mesopotamian practice of sealing provides its own unique challenges to the bevy of scholars who have attempted to determine the exact significance of this practice for the Mesopotamians. Many scholars view seals and seal impressions simply as testimonies to the exercise of authority, but a few scholars argue that the value of the seal in Mesopotamia has not been adequately explored. In her study of the practice of sealing in the Ur III period, I. Winter (1987: 69-106; plates 1-10) contends that cylinder seals displaying an introduction scene to the god and bearing a long dedicatory inscription (what she terms "official" seals) signified the legitimate authority of the seal-owner to hold his office within the Ur III bureaucracy. She argues that these presentation seals played a necessary part in the administrative process, and that together word and image on the seal established the authority of the official who wielded the seal. J.N. Postgate (1988: 181-187) sharply disagrees with Winter's interpretation of these seals; he responds that a seal is not "a legitimation of authority" but rather "one manifestation of authority" (p. 185). Postgate maintains that the design and/or inscription on the seal providing information about the identity and functions of the seal-owner was only "incidental," and that this information was "evidentiary, not constitutive of the authority" (*ibid*). He demonstrates that it could not have been necessary for seals to convey this information, because not all seals did so. If it was not necessary, then "the authority of the seal-owner cannot in any way have been bound up in his use of a particular type of seal" (*ibid*). The function of seals extended beyond their administrative and bureaucratic use to include their value as jewelry or as votive offerings (see D. Collon 2001: 15-30).
[248] Baines and Yoffee 1998: 210.

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bureaucracy; a large proportion of the tablets discovered during the Old Babylonian period, on the other hand, were found in private homes and record business transactions, family law, and private correspondence. Historians account for this distribution by arguing that "it reflects the cultural and organizational emphases of distinct periods and important differences between them."[249]

In other words, many administrative and economic activities were simply not covered by writing in ancient Mesopotamian systems: some systems seem to have required a written record at every stage, whereas in others "the scribes do not seem to have been put to work much."[250] Moreover, documentary coverage of an economic system in ancient Mesopotamia seems to have been affected by "the extent of the palace's administrative reach."[251] For example, the Third Dynasty of Ur appears to have extensively documented the heavy state control it exerted over nearly every aspect of Ur III production or labor; around 25,000 of the documents generated by this administration have been published so far. In contrast, the administrative reach and intensity of the First Dynasty of Babylon appears to have shrunk considerably; the lack of dense documentary coverage during this period may be due to the fact that the administration favored "contractual relationships with outside parties."[252]

Several studies have shown that the uses of writing expanded in ancient Mesopotamia across time, as did writing's intended audience. For example, in the Ur III period, practices such as contracts for the sale of land which had previously been verbal came to be written.[253] Letters and loans appear to have been a later development in the use of writing than real estate transactions and other documents related to temple and palace administration.[254] The Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian periods saw a drastic change in the uses of writing: there was a sudden development of new genres as well as

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[249] *Ibid.*

[250] J. N. Postgate 2001: 182.

[251] *Ibid*, 185.

[252] *Ibid*, 190. Furthermore, the use of writing to record the movement of goods may also have been dependent on the presence and availability of scribes. Fissore (1994: 339-354) believes that a relatively low number of scribes at the ancient site of Mari in what is now eastern Syria accounts for the fact that the written records from this site appear to cover only around fifty percent of the real movement of goods.

[253] Charpin 2002: 36-43.

[254] Postgate 1984: 4-18. By the time of Hammurabi, some land-sale transactions were not considered valid at all unless documented in writing.

"a vast extension of reading and writing practices throughout society."[255] M.T. Larsen terms this development the growth of "the private uses of literacy."[256] While writing continued to be used for bureaucratic purposes, "a number of practices developed in the sector of public administration were diffused throughout the *private sector* as well, and adapted to suit new purposes."[257] Archives discovered in private residences document the recording of a wide variety of private transactions. From a handful of letters dating to the third millennium the number explodes into the thousands during the second millennium.

In marked contrast to the situation in ancient Egypt, where writing was used for monumental display almost from the very beginning, in ancient Mesopotamia writing in public places (except for on cylinder seals) and on works of art was rare until the late third millennium.[258] The development of the highly centralized control of one government in Egypt led to craft activities that did not have a parallel development in the less centralized region of Mesopotamia, namely the creation of monumental and expensive arts and crafts projects.[259] In Egypt, the royal court's patronage and control of craftsmen and craft production at the onset of the Early Dynastic period played a pivotal role in the formation of new traditions of craftsmanship. For example, essential elements in artistic and architectural compositions were formed through the integration of hieroglyphs into the design on Egyptian monuments. Mesopotamian cuneiform, conversely, did not accord any value to the image in writing.[260] Despite this difference, writing did come to be used publicly for propagandistic purposes in ancient Mesopotamia, albeit at a later date.

The later use of writing for public display appears to be linked with the first political centralization of the land and the military expansion of the state which accompanied this process.[261] Writing was granted a power that extended beyond the purview of the elite and transformed into a symbol of political and economic power. This

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[255] Larsen 1989: 138.
[256] *Ibid.*
[257] *Ibid.*
[258] Baines 1992: 333-337.
[259] Wenke 1991: 279-329.
[260] Vanstiphout 1995: 2181-2196. Vanstiphout believes this is due to the writing medium and utensil, since wet clay and a sharp reed stylus rather destroys the original shape of the "object."
[261] See Michalowski 1994: 49-70.

particular use of writing expanded greatly over the centuries and millennia, as stelae were increasingly set up in conquered lands, law "codes" were monumentalized in the central places of Mesopotamia proper, and later in the Neo-Assyrian period as public buildings came to be adorned with long texts on the relief slabs. Michalowski argues that "the primary audience for these texts were those who could not read and that this "silent" writing was a supreme symbol of social hierarchy and control."[262] For the elite audience in particular, literary texts were frequently conscripted to provide legitimation for a particular ruler or dynasty. For example, the rulers of the Isin Dynasty (ca. 2000-1800 BCE) inaugurated a policy of ideology and propaganda that employed literary texts in order to establish an artificial continuity with the previous house of Ur (Third Dynasty of Ur, ca. 2100-2000 BCE).[263]

As time progressed, writing's uses also increasingly expanded to include the religious sphere. Enlisted for rendering ritual texts, writing aided in religious observance. By the second millennium, tablets could be deposited as votive offerings in temples. Tablets dedicated to the gods of writing and deposited in temples as votive offerings, apparently by apprentice scribes, have been discovered in temples such as the main temple of Šaduppum dating from the eighteenth century.[264] Even cylinder seals could be votive, and in such cases were not worn or carried in relation to public office.[265] Unlike in Egypt, however, the ancient Mesopotamians do not appear to have employed writing to inscribe dedicatory graffiti; in fact, there are no known graffiti texts in Akkadian cuneiform script at all. A. Peden attributes this lack of Mesopotamian graffiti to the "unsuitability" of cuneiform's wedge-shaped signs for writing casual texts on rock surfaces or walls.[266]

Conversely, in the second and first millennia the Mesopotamians exploited the potential of writing to record prophetic and divinatory activity – a potential not generally taken advantage of by the Egyptians, but exploited by other regions and kingdoms within Mesopotamia's sphere of influence (e.g. the cities of Mari and Išchali, as well as the

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[262] *Ibid*, 58-59.
[263] Michalowski 1987b: 55-68. According to Michalowski, these texts included "The Lament over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur," "The Tummal Chronicle," and perhaps the so-called Sumerian King List.
[264] Charpin 2002: 36-43.
[265] D. Collon 2001: 15-30.
[266] Peden 2001: xix, n. 2.

Levant region). At the early second millennium site of Mari, the oracles of deities delivered through various prophets or seers were often written down in letters between officials and the king, Zimri-Lim.[267] In Neo-Assyria during the first millennium (and particularly during the Sargonid period, ca. 721-627 BCE), the recording of prophecies and the written interpretation of omens became an important state activity.[268] Oracles delivered by prophet-like figures and omens derived from divinatory practices were recorded and made into archival collections, most likely for later reference by scholars serving the state.[269] In both the Mari and the Neo-Assyrian cases, writing was not simply used to record an oracle along with the names of the deity speaking and the addressees without modification. Prophetic reports in both Neo-Assyrian and Mari texts appear to have undergone a process in which scribal conventions and stylization played active roles, as part of the procedure whereby the oracles' rendering in writing transformed them into a literary form. The scribe may even have given what he deemed to be the gist of the prophecy without writing down the entire transcription of it. Thus the literacy of the recorder or scribe acted in shaping and re-interpreting the original oracle.

The fact that the ancient Mesopotamians used the written medium for recording and rendering permanent their religious activities reflects the increased respect accorded to writing as the centuries rolled by. The development of a "specialized technical vocabulary referring to faithful copying" and to the standardization of many text types in the first millennium also points to a growing respect for the written text – omen collections, lexical lists, medical texts, and literary compositions all acquired a standardized recension.[270] The clay tablets bearing these texts and placed in archives now became the reliable storehouses of knowledge, rather than the memory of the

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[267] M. Nissinen 2000: 235-271. According to Nissinen, the prophets apparently had need of scribes to transmit their messages for them because they lacked the professional skills needed "to produce a written document of sufficiently high standard" (p. 246).
[268] J. Reade 1986: 213-222.
[269] Nissinen (2000) suggests that both Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal used prophecy in a propagandistic way to remove any suspicions of illegitimacy in their respective reigns. The collection of prophetic oracles favorable to the king can therefore be seen as yet another way in which writing served the propagandistic purposes of the state.
[270] Veldhius 1999: 101-118, especially p. 112.

teacher.[271] Lexical lists were no longer employed exclusively as exercises for pupils; they were "upgraded to become crucial sources of a venerable tradition."[272] In a study on the interrelationship of learning and power in Neo-Assyria during the Sargonid period (ca. 721-627 BCE), M. E. Vogelzang observes that the Assyrians had come to regard "the essence of the texts which formed the traditional literature" as "holy."[273] They ascribed a divine origin to many of the texts, and they quoted these works in distinctive ways, often preceding quotations with the words "it is written" or "one says." Likewise the scholars who edited and collected these texts doubtlessly acquired greater and greater status, not only in the first millennium but earlier periods as well. That lexical lists and literary texts from earlier periods in Babylonia became integral to the Sargonid scribal curriculum demonstrates that the scribes of this period "were trained to be the bearers of the traditional learning of the time."[274]

(4) The Collection and Storage of Documents in Archives

Any examination of the uses of writing in ancient Mesopotamia invariably encounters the challenges posed by ancient methods of collecting and storing texts in archives, as well as by the enigmatic literate mentality that these archives reflect. Although scholars have progressed dramatically in their understanding of the shape of these archival collections, they still often find themselves baffled by the seemingly irrational or random nature of the various archives and tablet groupings found scattered throughout most ancient Mesopotamian sites. As the earlier discussion of archives in this chapter intimated (see pp. 34-37), modern conceptions of an archive should not be applied to the identity of archives in ancient Mesopotamia. To reiterate: general archives, i.e. places where archival material of demonstrable value and of many origins are gathered, are a type of archive that did not exist during this ancient period in either Greece or the Near East.

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[271] *Ibid*, 112. The flexibility of the second millennium Old Babylonian lists (as evidenced by a number of features) demonstrates that the schoolmaster did not use a master copy of the lists but transmitted from memory to his pupils his knowledge regarding the writing of lists.
[272] *Ibid.*
[273] M.E. Vogelzang 1995: 17-28, quote found on p. 18.
[274] *Ibid.*

When it comes to the analysis of archives in Mesopotamia, knowing whether an archive unearthed by excavators was a living ("active") or a dead ("inactive") one is particularly problematic, thanks to the difficulty of establishing the archaeological contexts of archival collections. It is generally agreed that the ancient Mesopotamians did not intend on keeping archival records for an indefinite time, and that most archival collections only span two, and at most three generations;[275] this fact aids researchers in determining whether an archive is living or dead after it has been unearthed.[276] Yet another difficulty which has dogged historians trying to understand the shape of archival collections is the problem of distinguishing between the "public" and "private" spheres. Scholars now conclude that there was no clean-cut distinction between public and private documents and their storage in either the ANE or the classical worlds.[277] Occasionally private documents could be stored in public archives, and public documents could be found in private archives. During the late Old Babylonian period, for example, officials sometimes kept personal records and correspondence in their workplaces, and "some government business … was carried on by privatized contracting out to independent agents."[278] Among the 2,000 tablets found in the "private house" in Tell ed-Dēr and also dating to the late Old Babylonian period were found not only the private documents of the family of Ur-Utu (the chief lamentation priest of the goddess Annunītum from 1647-1625 BCE), but also official documents connected to the personnel and the religious rites

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[275] Michalowski 2003: 451-478.

[276] In some cases, however, it proves quite difficult to determine this; for example, the fact that a house at Tell ed-Dēr (the ancient Sippar-Amnanum) containing approximately 2,000 tablets and belonging to Ur-Utu, lamentation priest of the goddess Annunītum, was burnt down led investigators to believe that the storage of tablets was still going on at the time of the fire, and therefore that the Ur-Utu archive was to be considered an active archive. Based upon his new analysis of the data however, K. Van Lerberghe (2003: 59-77) has determined that this Old Babylonian (seventeenth century BCE) archive was in fact no longer an active archive in antiquity, and that what was found in the excavations of this house was "the remainder of a once larger archive stored in an abandoned house that burnt down and collapsed later" (p. 75).

[277] Cf. J. Black and W. Tait 1995: 2197-2209; M. Brosius 2003: 1-16; G. de Breucker 2003: 13-23; O. Pedersén 1998: 269; K. Van Lerberghe 2003: 59-77; and R. Zettler 1996: 81-101. See also below (p. 94) on the hazy boundaries that existed between the private and public spheres at the Syrian site of Ugarit, as exhibited by the tablet collections of several houses.

[278] Black and Tait 1995: 2202. In first millennium Mesopotamia, the boundaries between private and public temple collections were quite fluid. de Breucker (2003: 13-23) notes the "striking" similarity between the contents of a tablet collection owned by an exorcist in Uruk during the Hellenistic period named Iqiša and those found in temple libraries of the same period (incantations, omens, astrological/astronomical texts, and lexical lists), and he observes that Iqiša had connections with the temple.

of the Annunītum temple.[279] The Assyrian traders in the commercial district of Kaniš
kept official letters (or their copies) in private archives; their presence is possibly due to
the fact that the archive's owner may have played an official role within the *kārum*
organization.[280]

It is not merely the contents of archival collections which have posed serious
obstacles for understanding the shape of archives as well as the type of literate mentality
which would have accumulated such an array of records, but also the locations and the
inner organization of the archives. In regards to location, it would appear that in public
or royal spheres, a system and its documentation were not necessarily contained within
the confines of a single building in the ANE. For example, at least three ancient
Mesopotamian kingdoms have failed to provide archaeologists with "an archive neatly
housed within the confines of an excavated palace building."[281]

Likewise the logic (or lack thereof?) behind the inner organization of
Mesopotamian archives continues to elude scholars. For example, the collections of
tablets found in the archives at Mari display an amazing amount of diversity, with
seemingly little organizational strategy behind their storage.[282] J. Margueron suggests
that there actually is an organizing principle directing the formulation of these archives,
but that it is guided by ancient principles, and not by modern ones.[283] The answer
however may simply be that the ancient Mesopotamians, like the ancient Greeks, had
simply not developed a document-minded mentality during the first periods after writing
had been introduced.

Such a conclusion has been reached by G. Fissore in his study of organizational
techniques in the documents and archives of Mari and other ANE sites.[284] Fissore argues
that oral practices predominated over writing in the organization of written documents

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[279] Van Lerberghe 2003: 59-77.
[280] Veenhof 2003: 81-82. Veenhof also observes that, "Occasionally private documents may also have
been deposited and kept under seal in the archives of a *kārum* as security or for procedural reasons" (p. 82).
"*Kārum*" was the term used topographically for the name of the quarter where the traders lived, as well as
to designate the organization of Assyrian traders settled there: "As such it refers to a corporate body with
executive powers, ultimately under the authority of the mother city of Assur" (p. 79).
[281] Postgate 2001: 181-194. At Boğazköy too, the tablets were stored in multiple locations.
[282] It should be noted, however, that the condition in which the records at Mari were found by excavators
does not necessarily reflect their organization under Zimri-Lim. Hammurabi's officials apparently rifled
through the records following the Babylonian conquest of the town.
[283] Margueron 1986: 141-152.
[284] Fissore 1994: 339-354.

and the way in which they were referenced at Mari: archival organization "still lay entirely outside the operations of rationalization linked to writing." What some scholars have attributed to a lack of archive organization at Mari, Fissore connects with the "ritualized interpersonal relationships of the group of officials responsible for managing the whole operation, apparently completely orally."[285]

The natural consequence of the institutional context – i.e. an organization based on the physical and oral nature of bureaucratic relations in the third and second millennia – was a "decentralized archive organization, rigidly linked to the places in which the archive records were formed." Fissore therefore finds significant the fact that no central archives have thus far been discovered in the early ANE world, and that documents have been found in discrete homogenous groups scattered throughout palatial buildings. These archival techniques are not remiss or sub-par; rather they accord with "a general context of administrative organization in which writing has not yet been able to express its full potential for changing the perception of systems of control and dominion."[286]

(5) The Role of the Scribes in Mesopotamian Society and Culture

These recent trends in the study of the written production by Mesopotamian scribes and in the ways they stored some of those productions have been accompanied by a growing desire to understand the role of these scribes within Mesopotamian society and culture. Determining the precise social background of literacy in ancient Mesopotamia is a difficult task, however, as is readily apparent by the subtle yet significant disagreement among scholars about the exact status of the "literate administrative expert," or scribe, as well as about the amount of power and influence ascribed to these literate individuals in Mesopotamian society.

The unspoken assumption behind the work of many scholars appears to be that the Mesopotamian scribes were the driving force behind not only the cultural development of Mesopotamia, but its political and economic development as well. The position of the literate class in Egypt seems to provide the model: in Egypt, the literate class was also the elite class, and these literate aristocrats held all or most of the prime

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[285] *Ibid*, 346.
[286] *Ibid*.

bureaucratic positions around the king, as the chief bureaucrat and the center around which the Egyptian society and economy revolved. This view of the Mesopotamian scribal class implies that these literate elite comprised the ranks of power-holders and ideology-producers, just as they did in Egypt. Furthermore, this view seems to assume that all of the bureaucrats were literate once writing had been introduced as the bureaucratic tool *par excellence*, and that the ability to read and write quickly became a professional qualification of all bureaucrats. An impressive array of evidence is summoned to support this view. First of all, the flood of administrative, economic, ritual, and literary texts streaming from the ancient tells of the Mesopotamian region seems to provide indisputable proof that the controllers of the reed stylus were also the controllers of the political, economic, social, and cultural development in Mesopotamia.

In discussions about the primary players in Mesopotamian bureaucracies, studies of the functions held by officials termed dub-sar (traditionally translated as "scribe") have argued that these scribes held many of the most elite and important positions in the Mesopotamian state.[287] Many historians also point out that the social level of those students who attended the scribal schools was high – in the "upper strata of society."[288] Social background appears to have been the main determining factor for the professional career of a scribe, as children from wealthy, important families had a much greater chance of receiving an education and of being selected to hold important positions.[289] Being born into a family with an ancestral tradition of the scribal arts was another big advantage. The patronymics recorded in colophons demonstrate that many families of scholars associated themselves with a prestigious ancestor.[290] Even several kings claimed to have mastered the scribal arts (including Šulgi and Aššurbanipal). Scribes came to

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[287] For example, G. Visicato (2000) describes the scribes as the most powerful institutional functionaries from the earliest recorded periods, even though his study of the functionaries termed dub-sars only spans the Early Dynastic and Sargonic periods. Part of his thesis is based on the questionable hypothesis that the earliest scribes bore the title sanga and only eventually assumed the title dub-sar during the course of the third millennium. According to Visicato's interpretation of the tablets from Early Dynastic sites such as Fara, the sanga officials fulfilled two simultaneous roles, one as "administrators and compilers of administrative documents," and the other as teachers of the scribal schools.

[288] L. Pearce 1995: 2265.

[289] Nissen, Damerow, and Englund 1993: 105-109.

[290] One should note, however, that these long genealogies were often fictitious. See W.G. Lambert 1957: 1-14.

think of themselves as "repositories" of a rich fund of "wisdom," and many scribes in later periods collected large numbers of tablets for personal, family, or royal libraries.[291]

While much about the privileged social background of the scribe and hereditary character of the scribal profession (as described by these scholars) would go uncontested in discussions of Mesopotamian bureaucracy, there are a number of studies which have offered a more nuanced portrait of the social background of literacy that underlines the unique role played by literate individuals in Mesopotamian society. Often implicit and at times explicit in their writings is a distinction drawn between the upper echelons of the elite (or "inner elite"), and the middle and lower echelons, with the literate generally being placed in the latter two categories. These studies tend to distinguish therefore between the classes of people to whom writing was restricted, and the classes of people who helped orchestrate this restriction. No assumption is made that the identity of the literate individuals in Mesopotamian society was exactly equivalent to the identity of those individuals in Egyptian society, despite the fact that both societies featured extensive scribal activity.

In their comparative analysis of the development of the state in Egypt and Mesopotamia, Baines and Yoffee have shown that the cause of the disparity in the social background of literacy in these two states lies in their respective socio-political developments.[292] In Mesopotamia, the city played a pivotal role in the development of the state, whereas in Egypt urbanism never became a defining characteristic of this state. Because Egypt was never factionalized into separate states centered on cities, the king became the central pivot around which all of the socio-political, economic, and cultural activities spun. The king's role as the perpetuator of the cosmic order, bolstered by his theoretical absolute ownership of the land and rights over his subjects, has material expression in the fact that the country's resources were mobilized by the palace as the central institution of Egypt. Through being "integrated into a small group of administrative officeholders near the king," the inner elite came to be closely bound to the king, therefore, and their status and wealth depended on his favor.[293] The highest

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[291] Charpin (2002: 36-43) notes, however, that no text has been found that praises the occupation of scribe, in contrast with Egypt.
[292] Baines and Yoffee 1998: 199-260.
[293] *Ibid*, 218.

class was also the bureaucratic class, and would therefore have almost certainly been literate.[294]

Such was not the case in the less monolithic Mesopotamia, however, where the use of writing was "more narrowly scribal."[295] Baines and Yoffee, as well as R. Wenke, connect this difference to the geo-political development of Mesopotamia. Instead of the establishment of a unified and centralized polity as in Egypt, Mesopotamia from very early on featured large settlements and communities characterized by significant proportions of occupational specialists, among whom were the scribes.[296] The Mesopotamian elite, however, were landowners and perhaps also important figures in community assemblies; from their ranks rose the kings who "progressively assumed more power as war leaders and who bought land from corporate landholding groups."[297] Rulers did not come up through a bureaucracy and were not typically literate, although a few claimed to have mastered the scribal arts.[298] Even within the bureaucratic ranks, not all of the bureaucrats may have been able to read and write. The higher level of bureaucrats may have had the scribes do their writing for them. It appears that scribes (the "literate") in Mesopotamia did not often obtain the status of the "inner elite"; they did however belong to a privileged subgroup of the broader elite, which also included specialized craftsmen.[299]

Although they represented their own subgroup as producers of high culture, the literate were not isolated from the concerns of the inner elite: scribes never formed their own "semi-autonomous guilds of literati" in Mesopotamia, nor did they ever engage in writing activities independent of the institutions of palace and temple.[300] In other words, there is a distinction to be made between the possessors of literate skills and the inner elite who harnessed those skills in order to legitimate and maintain inequality through

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[294] See Baines and Eyre 1983: 65-96 as well as Baines and Yoffee 1998: 199-260.
[295] Baines and Eyre 1983: 81.
[296] See Wenke 1991: 279-329, especially p. 311. In her study of Mesopotamian city-centers, E. Stone (1997: 15-26) observes that three separate empires were founded in southern Mesopotamia from 2700 to 1500 BCE; despite the economic benefits of political centralization, however, an empire simply could not be maintained over a long period of time.
[297] Baines and Yoffee 1998: 207.
[298] Baines and Eyre 1983: 81.
[299] Michalowski 1987b: 55-68. Michalowski notes that "there is little evidence to support the hypothesis that a majority of bureaucrats could read and write" (p. 62).
[300] Baines and Yoffee 1998: 248 and 238.

sustaining their self-image and transmitting it down the generations. Inequality in both Mesopotamia and Egypt had produced a large surplus for a small, "inner" elite, and this appropriation of resources from the vast majority of the population had to be legitimized. The elite separated themselves completely from the rest of their society, and developed their own separate system of values which could not be accessed by those outside of their social network. They sought to control "symbolic resources" and to appropriate order, thereby "transform[ing] the meaning of wealth [so] as to create more wealth."[301]

The literate classes were the channel through which was funneled the ideology and propaganda of the city-state and the elite classes. As well as accomplishing the more mundane administrative tasks of the state bureaucracy, the literate classes were crafted into a mechanism for asserting the separateness of the inner elite and scribal classes. The process of indoctrinating young scribes into a shared bureaucratic culture was accomplished by sending them to scribal schools where they learned the common literary tradition. Indeed, all middle and lower level bureaucrats had to attend the Eduba before achieving any office.[302] Acquiring reading and writing skills was only the first stage in a curriculum which immersed students in "an ancient common Mesopotamian literary tradition" and indoctrinated them into "a worldview that supported the current structure of society and the state."[303] This explains why the type of curriculum used for instruction in the learning of cuneiform had very little to do with more practical training in administrative matters.[304] It also demonstrates that the administrative world was never completely distinct from the world of literary activity in Mesopotamia; in fact, in some periods the two worlds may have been inseparable. The combining of these two worlds demonstrates how successfully the inner elite appropriated and manipulated literacy and other products of high culture, in order to legitimize the hierarchies thought to exist in the world as well as the important leading roles of the kings and the gods.[305]

As in Egypt, a key implication of this state of affairs was the restriction of literacy and writing to the scribal class. A perusal of the scholarly literature regarding

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[301] *Ibid*, 234.
[302] Michalowski 1987b: 55-68.
[303] Michalowski 2003: 456. Cf. S. Tinney 1998: 40-50.
[304] As has been noted in a previous section, several scholars now believe that most of the surviving Old Babylonian literary texts (i.e. from Nippur, Ur, Isin and Sippar) were the exercises of schoolchildren.
[305] Baines and Yoffee 1998: 235.

Mesopotamian literacy suggests that the restriction of literacy stemmed from a complex interplay of different forces – the tendency of societies with restricted literacy to prefer the use of foreign, even dead, languages, inevitable differences between written and oral modes of discourse, and deliberate efforts at restriction. The use of a language for official writing that was not the native tongue of those who used it appears to have transpired in Mesopotamia from very early periods. Michalowski has pointed out that the language adopted by the Ur III dynasty as the language of administration and propaganda throughout the "empire" (Sumerian) was probably no longer a living language during this period (if it ever had been). Although Akkadian writing dominated over Sumerian from the Isin-Larsa period onwards, the use of Sumerian spread wherever cuneiform writing spread, and all schooling was based on Sumerian. Sumerian also continued to be modified as a classical literary language ("an ossified language of literature") by speakers of the Akkadian dialects (Babylonian and Assyrian), even though it had long ceased to be a spoken language.[306] Even scribes throughout the ANE whose native tongues were not Akkadian or Sumerian attempted to learn these languages and continued to use them after they had adapted their own writing system.

The cuneiform writing system was also largely separated from the everyday world of the majority of the population by virtue of the fact that it made no attempt to express the vernacular.[307] The written tradition of Mesopotamia may have been transmitted orally, but as a highly coded form of communication it was completely separate from the vernacular languages.[308] Numerous characteristics distinguish cuneiform from the syntax of oral language, among them their different structure and the different ways in which information is presented in cuneiform writing versus oral language.[309] Indeed, literacy (and *not* the spoken language) played the largest role in ordering the transmission of written tradition in both Mesopotamia and Egypt. The written format was organized so

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[306] Michalowski 1994: 59.

[307] *Ibid.* During the first half millennium after the advent of writing in Sumer, the script did draw more close to language by rendering signs in the order in which they were pronounced and by inscribing the full morphology of Sumerian in a written message (see Michalowski 1994: 55). The adoption of the cuneiform writing system by the Akkadian language encouraged tendencies towards a syllabic use of the cuneiform system of writing (see Larsen 1987: 227-245).

[308] Cf. J. Cooper 1992: 103-122; Michalowski 1995: 2279-2291; H. Pittman 1994: 177-203; and Vanstiphout 1986: 217-234.

[309] For example, information was delivered sequentially in oral language, whereas the proto-cuneiform texts were organized into hierarchies. See Damerow 1999: 1-18.

as to preserve information, thereby replacing memory; new, purely literary documents soon emerged, such as royal inscriptions; texts spoke to other texts in a continual play of intertextuality, allowing for the creation of limitless combinations of discourse.[310]

Formal barriers to learning to read and write also functioned to maintain social difference. As has already been noted, the students attending the scribal schools typically came from privileged backgrounds, i.e. wealthy families with a scribal heritage. In order to achieve proficiency, scribes had to submit to a formal education consisting of belletristic compositions, lexical lists, ritual texts, and other compendia. Rather than being diffused to the population in general therefore, literature appears to have been used solely for teaching writing, thereby restricting it to members of the bureaucratic classes who could obtain this scribal education.[311] Several scholars have identified a trend in the scholarly texts that took place in the mid-second millennium through the first millennium towards an even greater degree of restriction. The writing system became more complicated and used an increasing number of logographic writings: the trend was not towards popularizing the writing system, but instead toward scribal exclusivity (there were even sanctions against transmitting specific bodies of written knowledge outside of the scribal class).[312]

The restricting effect of these barriers to writing and literacy was heightened by limited access to written and artistic display in Mesopotamia (just as in Egypt).[313] Written texts intended for display typically were placed in palaces and temples. Stelae were increasingly set up in conquered lands, particularly in the first millennium, but these texts were intended to be "silent" writing set up for those who could not read as "a

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[310] Vanstiphout 1995: 2181-2196.

[311] Michalowski 1994: 58-59. There are no means for assessing rates of literacy in Mesopotamia (see Vanstiphout 1995: 2187); however, an attempt has been made to calculate the number of scribes who were working during the third millennium. It has been estimated that about thirty scribes were active in one particular archive at the same time at Girsu, ca. 2350 BCE (there were certainly others working in other archives at Girsu as well). There may have been around a hundred scribes in the entire Akkadian empire a few decades later. The administrative reforms of Šulgi during the Ur III period led to an increase in the number of scribes; between 2100 and 2000 BCE, estimates call for around 1,600 scribes in the empire of Ur (see Charpin 2002: 36-43).

[312] P.-A. Beaulieu 1992: 98-111. According to Beaulieu's analysis, the type of texts that bear prohibitory formulas tend to be expository texts "exposing the theological and (pre)philosophical speculations of Babylonian scholars." They include "learned compendia explaining parts of rituals, lists of gods with their sacred attributes, star catalogues, astrological explanatory lists, descriptions of gods and other mythical beings" (pp. 107-108). Cf. Baines 1992: 333-337 and Larsen 1989: 121-148.

[313] This has been observed by Baines 1992: 333-337 and Baines and Yoffee 1998: 248 in particular.

supreme symbol of social hierarchy and control."[314] In sum, the combination of the foreign languages adopted by the Mesopotamian administrations, the installation of written discourse as a completely different form of communication from the vernacular, and the deliberate efforts to restrict literacy, all served to distance literacy from the vast majority of the population.

As in the study of Egyptian literacy however, one outcome of the focus on the scribal class as a restricted literate caste is the tendency to neglect indications that literacy was not necessarily sharply restricted in every period of Mesopotamian history. There is some solid evidence that levels of literacy may have fluctuated in different periods, and that other individuals besides the scribal classes attached to palaces and temples may have possessed literate skills. Indeed, the data from the early second millennium points to a marked expansion in the range of uses for writing, and in the number of people who could read and write (although this category was still restricted, only expanding to include members of the elite such as important merchants, governors, and ambassadors).[315] The extension of writing practices into other elite sectors besides the narrowly bureaucratic and scribal is suggested by the diffusion of a number of writing practices that had been developed for administrative uses throughout the private sector. Old Babylonian period archives discovered in private residences document the recording of a wide variety of private transactions. From a handful of letters dating to the third millennium, the number explodes into the thousands during the second millennium.[316]

Noteworthy in this respect is the Old Assyrian trading colony of Kaniš (modern Kültepe) in Anatolia, which has produced a significant amount of writing by that particular business community. Around 15,000 texts spanning forty-fifty years of activity were discovered in private merchants' archives dating to ca. 1800 BCE and reflecting the activities of a very busy community engaged in long-distance trade. Nearly one-half of these texts consisted of private correspondence; the discovery of these texts "indicates the very high level of written interaction" and that the knowledge of reading

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[314] Michalowski 1994: 58-59.
[315] For the Old Assyrian period, see Larsen 1989: 132f.; for the Old Babylonian period, see Charpin 2002: 38 and 1986: Chapter 6.
[316] Larsen 1989: 138-139. All later phases of Mesopotamian history saw the presence of private archives; a wide scattering of archives all over the Assyrian capital of Assur has been documented by excavations.

and writing was fairly widespread in this particular community.[317] These texts also demonstrate that levels of writing competence could fluctuate between the poles of complete mastery to that of limited literacy. The letters written by these merchants show the development of a simplified syllabary, and this fact suggests that not all literate people actually had to master the full range of cuneiform.[318]

Indeed, Larsen has argued that the broadening of the boundaries of literacy in the early second millennium was no accident, as he believes there is a correlation between "the degree of centralization, the nature of the script, its field of usage, and the degree of social literacy."[319] In the third millennium, the script reflected and served the needs of a centralized government and a "highly stratified society": it was therefore "logographic in character with a great number of signs, and it [was] used basically as a mnemonic device."[320] The first half of the second millennium saw a period of decentralization and the development of small territorial states as well as a "strongly developing private sector" which in some instances controlled foreign trade. The script tended towards a more syllabic system with a reduced number of signs and a limited usage of logograms. According to Larsen, this conscious simplification of the writing system occurring in certain sectors enabled the development of a more widespread basic literacy, as more people were able to gain access to it.[321]

While Larsen does well to emphasize the extension of writing practices to other sectors of Mesopotamian society, he fails to qualify his assessment of a "widespread basic literacy." None of the data suggest that literate skills spread beyond the elite classes – the high-ranking officials, merchants, and some elite women.[322] The archives

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[317] Larsen 1989: 133.
[318] Michalowski 1994: 59.
[319] Larsen 1989: 141.
[320] *Ibid.*
[321] Cf. Charpin (2002: 38), who also believes that this development (the expansion of literacy and writing practices to other members of the elite class) should be attributed to the fact that cuneiform during this period attained its greatest level of simplicity.
[322] Besides the letters of the Kaniš merchants, there is another indication that the Old Babylonian period may have presented opportunities for disseminating literacy to a wider spectrum of people: this is the attestation of a small number of female literati in both Mari and Sippar. At Mari the names of at least ten women scribes are mentioned; in Sippar, the *naditu* women of the cloister (*gagû*) of Sippar served as recorders and witnesses to the transactions of the other *naditu* women. At both Mari and Sippar, these women scribes "served the documentational needs of other women in their society" (Pearce 1995: 2266). As for female scholars, a small number of women related in some way to the king (either as wives or daughters) are said to have composed literary compositions during the late third millennium. Some

discovered in private residences from the second millennium onwards, for example, appear to have belonged to people engaged in an important official capacity with the administration and/or temple, or to people who could be classified as "scholars."[323] Moreover, as a witness to a supposed general trend towards broader literacy outside of the elite circles, the testimony of the trading colony at Kaniš may be rather compromised by its exceptional nature. The function of Kaniš within the Old Assyrian system was particularly important: as the administrative "capital" of a network that comprised around thirty-five Assyrian colonies and smaller trading stations, it was "the centre of communications, of judicial activity, and of commercial operations, which entailed bookkeeping, storage, deposit and transfer of merchandise, and periodic settlements of accounts."[324] The merchant classes at Kaniš should probably also be considered elite classes who attended the scribal schools (Eduba) along with the future bureaucrats.[325]

The second half of the second millennium on down through the first millennium was characterized by a trend towards political re-centralization and bureaucratization, during which the cuneiform script transformed into a "complex tool which [was] manipulated by trained specialists."[326] The beginning of the first millennium in particular saw a period of increasing centralization that was accompanied by an increasingly restricted literacy outside the provenance of professional scribes.

Sumerologists even believe that Enheduanna, high priestess of the moon god Nanna and the daughter of the Akkadian king Sargon, wrote and compiled a collection of Sumerian hymns to temples (R. Harris 1990: 3-17). It is difficult to determine, however, whether women themselves would have been able to write down any of their compositions, especially during this early period. Harris has discovered a piece of evidence that suggests that some female scribes might have been competent enough to write literature themselves: a fragment of the vocabulary text Proto à-A, which is known from its colophon to have been written by a female scribe named Belti-remenni; the same scribe also probably wrote an extant literary tablet (*Ibid*). It is important to note that all of these female literati represented either the daughters of the king or those elite women who devoted their lives to the sun god and inhabited the exclusively female quarter of the city of Sippar; as in Egypt, female literacy never appears to have reached to the non-elite classes (see Michalowski 2003: 451-478).

[323] This is a fact that Larsen (1989: 138-139) himself observes.
[324] Veenhof 2003: 78-79.
[325] Michalowski 1994: 59. According to Michalowski, the example of the Kaniš trading colony serves to show how "Different political forms utilized different methods to control the hearts and minds of the literate members of society, and they used writing in different ways in order to control memory of the past as well as to conquer distance" (p. 59).
[326] Larsen 1989: 142. Cf. Larsen 1987: 221 and Charpin 2002: 38.

(6) Mesopotamian Literacy and the Scribal Institutions of the West

An "international approach to languages" characterized the development of writing practices in those regions lying to the west of Mesopotamia during the Middle and Late Bronze ages.[327] A key component to this international approach was the appropriation of the Mesopotamian cuneiform system of writing as well as Mesopotamian writing conventions. Indeed, one of the most remarkable developments in the ANE was the spread of Mesopotamian forms of literacy to other regions within the Mesopotamian sphere of influence and the interaction of these forms with native, local practices of communication and dissemination of information.[328]

The emergence of multilingual written cultures in the ANE coincides with a renewal of Babylonian influence in peripheral areas such as Mari on the Middle Euphrates, Tell Beydar in the northern Habur area, and Ebla in western Syria starting in about 2600 BCE.[329] The diffusion of the cuneiform system of writing was not the only form of Mesopotamian literacy that was transported to various sites throughout the ANE world. The use of Sumerian spread wherever cuneiform writing spread, and all schooling was based on Sumerian. The use of the Akkadian language also followed its cuneiform script; the Middle Babylonian dialect of the Akkadian language came to be used throughout the entire area dominated by the Hittites as well as those regions under the influence or dominance of Mesopotamia.[330]

Michalowski argues against the common model for the linguistic situation in these peripheral areas, *viz*. that Sumerian was the main literary language which was exported to sites such as Ebla and Mari, with other Semitic languages only gradually assuming the role of literary language. Such a view is flawed, according to Michalowski,

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[327] Dalley 2000: 79-88.

[328] Even more remarkable is the spread of Mesopotamian forms of literacy to Egypt, the location and point of origin of the other imperial writing system. This is witnessed by the Amarna Letters, the diplomatic correspondence (written in Akkadian) between the pharaoh Akhenaten and his vassals in Syria-Palestine.

[329] M. van de Mieroop 2003: 125-137.

[330] The uses that were found for writing in Mesopotamia also found their way to the outlying regions. Mesopotamia exported to its conquered lands and neighbors "its system of institutional management complete with written formulation" (Postgate 1984: 14). The palace at Ebla (modern Tell Mardikh) in Syria as early as 2400 BCE adapted cuneiform script to the needs of its own administration (see A. Archi 2003: 17-36). School texts came along with the script – these texts reveal the high degree of unity in the literary tradition from the very inception of writing. Despite the different political configurations of the different sites which produced texts, the same Early Dynastic literary texts, including lexical texts, were found at each site. At Ebla in particular it seems that the importation of the script brought with it the entire canonical corpus (Michalowski 1987a: 165-175).

because it buys into the conception of "Sumerians" as a single ethnic group, culture complex and language. He argues for an understanding of written languages that divorces them from their supposed vernacular counterparts, noting that "The fact that Sumerian was written in Sumer provides no evidence that the language was indeed spoken in that region during the third millennium."[331] What was transmitted to these peripheral areas was not a culture therefore, but merely writing conventions: "Conventions of writing are not cultures," he writes, "and thus the 'Sumerians' as we have imagined them are only a convenient label for a complex of cultures and languages that scholars are only beginning to explore."[332] To bolster this point, Michalowski indicates the example of the linguistic situation at Mari. Here two languages and writing systems apparently overlapped in usage – pre-Old Babylonian and standard Old Babylonian. The problem of how two distinct writing systems could be contemporary is solved when one rejects the notion that these languages represent the spoken tongues of the city and views them instead as "only standardized conventions of written communication."[333]

Along with writing conventions came also the practice of archiving. The collecting of texts into archives is attested in various regions outside Mesopotamia from the third millennium onwards, from the third millennium site of Ebla in Syria to the late second millennium cities of the Hittite homeland[334] and of Hittite-dominated Syria (such as Emar[335] and Ugarit). As in the archives found in Mesopotamia, modern, state-oriented conceptions of documentary organization are inapplicable to the situation of these ancient archives. None of these texts from the regions under Mesopotamian or Hittite domination possessed standardized dating practices.[336] Strict centralization of

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[331] Michalowski 1987a: 166.

[332] *Ibid*, 173. Michalowski terms the model that he has proposed to describe the linguistic situation in the much of the ANE world the "areal concept of linguistic heterogeneity" (p. 172).

[333] *Ibid*, 174.

[334] Archives and some libraries dating primarily to the period ca. 1350-1180 BCE have been unearthed at the capital Hattuša (modern Boğazöy), and in the cities of the Hittite homeland Tapigga, Šapinuwa, and Šarišša. Documents dating to before 1350 have been recovered at Hattuša, and a Hittite archive dating to the early fourtheen century has been discovered at Masat Höyük. See O. Pedersén 1998: 42.

[335] Emar was the center of the kingdom of Ashtata, which was incorporated into the Hittite empire by Šuppiluliuma I (ca. 1344-1322 BCE). The material from Emar dates from the late fourteenth century to the beginning of the twelfth century BCE (A. Kuhrt 1995: 314-315).

[336] Pedersén 1998: 42. Dates appear only rarely on single documents from Ebla, and even those which show year names do not provide researchers with much help, because their chronological sequence is not

documentary organization was not the general guiding principle in these ancient sites, as it is for modern states.[337] Archival collections were not necessarily conserved in one central place, but could be found dispersed around a site, as at Old Babylonian Mari,[338] Old Babylonian Išchali,[339] and Late Bronze Age Ugarit.

At Ugarit in particular, the distribution of archives throughout the site demonstrates the hazy boundaries that existed between the private and public spheres, just as in Mesopotamia. In several private houses in the eastern, western, and central parts of the city, libraries with archival sections have been excavated that contain administrative lists (some recording relations with foreign countries) and diplomatic correspondence, in addition to more typical "private" texts such as religious texts and letters.[340] As signaled by the discovery of documents and archives in private houses, Ugarit mirrored ancient Mesopotamian sites in its fostering of different locales for scribal activity. The presence of numerous examples of international correspondence in the houses of two prominent Ugaritic scribes, Rap'anu and Urtenu, suggests that the offices that were concerned with international relations were found outside of the royal palace, in the residences where the scribes placed all of the material necessary for their formation, and where they likewise dealt with trading affairs with foreign countries as well as with purely internal affairs.[341]

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known at this point (Archi 1986: 72-86). Settling on a date for many of the texts from Ugarit has proven to be possible, however, as quite a few of the texts (especially the legal texts dealing with the transfer of real estate), indicate the name and the patronymic of the ruling king. The sequence of the kings for the fourteenth through the twelfth centuries can then be compared with the sequence of their Hittite overlords to obtain a somewhat reliable date (albeit no more precise than a decade or so; see W. van Soldt 1986: 196-204).

[337] S. Lackenbacker 1995: 67-76.

[338] J. Margueron 1986: 141-152.

[339] Cf. M. Ellis 1986a: 112-120 and 1986b: 757-786.

[340] Fissore 1994: 346.

[341] Cf. Pedersén 1998: 77; van Soldt 1991: 229-231; and Lackenbacher 1995: 67-76. A number of Ugaritic scholars point to the private houses containing texts (particularly those housing archives of predominantly lexical texts and Akkadian or Sumerian literary texts) as the site of "schools where scribes were trained and where the whole Mesopotamian curriculum … had to be digested" (van Soldt 1991: 229; cf. M. Heltzer 1982: 158-159). The fact that the wings of the palace have yielded only three lexical texts suggests that a similar situation obtained at Ugarit as in Mesopotamia during the Old Babylonian period, when schools were run in the houses of expert scribes rather than in the palace or temple. Furthermore, the literary and non-legal or economic texts contain references to certain scribes who termed themselves "disciples" (LÚ A.BA.KAB.ZU.ZU) of other scribes; this is the case of Ilumilku, the disciple of *Atn.Prln*, the "high (chief) priest" (*rb khnm*) (see Heltzer 1982: 158-159).

As far as can be determined from the limited data about scribes, the role played by the literate in these neighboring regions was similar to that of the literate in Mesopotamia proper. According to the archaeological record from sites such as Ebla and Mari, in the third and early second millennia arose "a stratified social hierarchy headed by a group of elite individuals" who were not necessarily themselves literate, but who required the productions of literacy to aid in the working of the administration and to legitimate their exploitation of the population.[342] As producers of high culture, the scribes were privileged members of the elite; at Ugarit, they may have been more readily admitted to the circle of the inner elite than they were in Mesopotamia. The international letters found in the house of Rap'anu have made scholars think of this scribe as a high ranking official in charge of important functions and having access to the most delicate affairs of the state.[343] Important scribes could even be given royal grants to their own villages; for example, a scribe named Yasiranu received from King Ammistamru II the village of E[xx]iš and "its grain and beer, the tithe and the sheep for pasturing-tax to Yasiranu (he gave)."[344]

Before leaving the topic of literacy and writing in Mesopotamia's western periphery, it is important to examine the *unique* features that characterized literate practices in these regions to the west of Mesopotamia. As was mentioned in the opening paragraph of this section, when Mesopotamian literacy was transmitted to a region or a city-state (whether through commercial exchanges or military invasion), it did not encounter local cultures devoid of their own particular ways of conveying information, or of their own mythologies.

Moreover, although cuneiform writing and its conventions may have provided the inspiration for the emergence of local scribal tradition and practices, Mesopotamian literacy rarely remained the sole means of expressing the written form of any given culture's language and traditions. Rather, it was the dynamic interaction sparked by the interface between Mesopotamian and local languages and cultures that shaped each respective culture's complex of literate practices in a variety of different ways. From a short survey of several third and second millennia sites in the Anatolian and Syro-

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[342] van de Mieroop 2002: 134.
[343] See Lackenbacher 1995: 67-76.
[344] Heltzer 1982: 159.

Palestinian regions, it soon becomes evident that the scribal milieu that sprang up in every culture both consciously and unconsciously sought to make discursive and ideological inroads against the predominant and much-revered scribal tradition of ancient Mesopotamia.

The most common manner in which this trend took shape was in the creation of written forms for local languages in Anatolia, Syria, and Palestine. The development of local scripts did not change the fact, however, that the Akkadian and/or Sumerian language and its cuneiform script served as the common administrative language for the sites in these regions that employed writing in their bureaucracies (with the exception of Ugarit and Hatti).[345] Even in the Hittite region and in the western Syrian city of Ugarit, the choice of which writing system to use for which purpose became a highly charged decision which reflected the unique status accorded to each culture's own written self-expression. For their internal official documents, the Hittites utilized the cuneiform script adapted to express their own Indo-European language (Hittite) and stored these tablets in their archives.[346] The Hittites only used Akkadian as a diplomatic language for international treaties and correspondence. The scribes of the royal chancellery were also familiar with Hurrian (the language of the Hittites' eastern neighbors) and Hattian (the

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[345] In western Syria, the third millennium city of Ebla not only documented the economic activity of its administration in Sumerian cuneiform, but also recorded the religious activity of its elite classes and copied the literary works of ancient Mesopotamia (in the case of the literary corpus, at least two other languages are represented; see Matthiae 2003: 165-178 and Michalowski 1987a: 165-175). The territorial monarchy of Mari that emerged in northern Syria from ca. 1830-1750 BCE documented the activity of the king of Mari (Tell Hariri) as well as various other kings of sites within Mari's sphere of influence (Terqa, Tell Leilan, Tell el-Rimah, Tell Brak) in letters written in Akkadian cuneiform, even though Mari's kings during this period claimed Amorite associations (Cf. V. Matthews 2002: 168-189 and R. Veenker 2002: 149-167). In contrast with the scribes at Mari, the Hittites adapted the cuneiform script to express their Indo-European language after they had achieved dominance in Anatolia in the seventeenth century BCE (see A. Dinçol and B. Dinçol 2001: 20-37). Following an undocumented period of around 150 years, the Hittite king Hattušili I (ca. 1650 BCE) began the process of adapting the cuneiform script to the Hittite language by bringing scribes back to his capital Hattuša (modern Boğazöy) from the Old Babylonian school after his campaigns in northern Syria. Between 3,000 and 3,500 clay tablets inscribed in the cuneiform script and in a number of languages, primarily Akkadian and Hittite, have been recovered in Hattuša (dating to the period 1650-1200 BCE; see Kuhrt 1995: 232). Some of these documents were found carefully deposited on the royal citadel, and others came from the temples at Hattuša, in particular the "Great Temple." All of these tablets seem to comprise the royal archives of the Hittite court and include political, historical, religious and literary texts (see Dinçol and Dinçol 2001: 20-37 and D. Hawkins 1986: 363-375).

[346] See note 345 above.

language of the pre-Hittite inhabitants of the land of Hatti), and they used these two languages primarily for ritual, magical and mythological compositions.[347]

Like Hattuša during the age of Hittite dominance, Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra) possessed a similarly cosmopolitan character, particularly in the way in which its literate professionals employed different languages and scripts for different purposes.[348] For both the Ugaritic and Hurrian languages, the Ugaritic scribes utilized a locally developed cuneiform script, based on alphabetic principles. Furthermore, they tended to use Ugaritic for local matters and Akkadian for international ones.[349] Most of the legal documents discovered in the main palace archives in the western part of the city were written in Akkadian, while Ugaritic was used for letters and administrative lists (although several letters in Akkadian were also found). The alphabetic cuneiform was also enlisted for writing down religious texts and the indigenous literature, two genres which were part of the Ugaritic culture; the scribes of Ugarit apparently believed that the language and script of the region best conveyed the essence of these texts.[350]

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[347] Hawkins 1986: 363-375. The other three languages represented in the documents from Hattuša include Luwian (probably spoken in the south and west of Anatolia), Palaic (associated with the area to the north-west and only sparsely represented), and Sumerian. Cuneiform writing was never etched onto Hittite monuments; it was only used to inscribe clay tablets. This observation suggests that the use of cuneiform writing to render the Hittite language on archival documents was an *official form of writing* as well as an official language (Dinçol and Dinçol 2001: 20-37). For monumental inscriptions on rock walls, stone stelae, and for writings on royal and personal seals, the Hittites used (and perhaps invented) the Hittite hieroglyphic script. The majority of the stone inscriptions in hieroglyphic date to the period of the so-called Late or Neo-Hittite period, ca. 1000-700 BCE. (The texts from the earlier period of the Hittite empire, ca. 1400-1200 BCE, are shorter, less well preserved, and less legible than those of the later first millennium.) In the wake of the collapse of the Hittite Empire ca. 1200 BCE, hieroglyphic writing was employed to support the legitimacy of the new Neo-Hittite states which sprang up in southern Anatolia and northern Syria. Although the kings of these small states endeavored to preserve Hittite culture, perpetuating the hieroglyphic system and appropriating the names of the some of the great kings of the Hittite Empire (such as Muwatalli and Šuppiluliuma) in order to exploit their connection with past Hittite greatness, they ruled over populations that had been greatly influenced by the changes in ethnic and cultural composition of the region (in some of these Neo-Hittite states the populations were almost entirely Aramean). The hieroglyphic tradition disappeared after the Neo-Hittite states were destroyed and their people dispersed by the Assyrian Empire from 745 BCE onwards.

[348] Ugarit's numerous international links are signaled by texts written in several foreign languages: Akkadian, some Hittite and Hurrian, items inscribed with Egyptian hieroglyphs, and a smattering of Cypro-Minoan texts. The evidence from personal names reveals that the population was comprised of local Syrians and Hurrians (Kuhrt 1995: 303).

[349] Pedersén 1998: 69.

[350] van Soldt 1991: 229. As for the written culture that existed in Palestine (Canaan) during the period which saw Ugarit's culture and economy thrive (the Late Bronze Age), the scarcity of epigraphic finds suggests that it was quite limited. See Chapter 3's discussion on written culture in Late Bronze and Early Iron Canaan.

In general, the image projected by the various materials from the Ebla texts (ca. 2400-2350 BCE), the extensive Mari archives (early eighteenth century), the tablets from Alalakh IV (later fifteenth century) and VII (late seventeenth century), as well as the Emar evidence and the contemporary material from Ugarit is of "a cosmopolitan and distinctive regional Syrian culture, based on independent city-states linked to each other by commerce and political alliances as well as rivalries."[351] These city-states managed to safeguard their unique cultural identities despite frequent domination by the large empires to the north, east, and south.

Conclusion

The primary task of this concluding section will be to initiate a discussion (which will be pursued in every consecutive chapter) regarding the ways in which the current discourse on literacy and writing in all three ancient cultures – Greece, Egypt, and Mesopotamia – can aid in the analysis of literacy and writing in the southern Levant in general, and in ancient Judah in particular. There is no question of imposing a model of literacy gleaned from one of these other civilizations on the Judean case; nonetheless, the paradigms developed by recent scholarship in these other fields can help contextualize the southern Levantine experience with writing by situating it within its wider ancient ANE and Mediterranean milieu. Furthermore, the outcome of the debate that has long featured in the study of ancient Greek writing on the universal meaning of literacy will be seen to offer an effective methodological framework for assessing the subject of literacy in Judah and the southern Levant. The short discussion presented in these next few pages will only be a beginning; the implications of the analysis of writing in these cultures will be developed in more detail in every chapter which is to follow.

First of all, the tendency for literacy to be restricted to the elite classes in each of these ancient societies – even in that of ancient Greece (with its less rigid, hierarchical social structure and its less segregated literate culture) is suggestive for the shape of the literate classes in the southern Levantine polities. Despite the greater ease with which the alphabet is learnt, Greek society was not characterized by widespread literacy following the advent of writing; literate activity primarily remained the province of the political and

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[351] Kuhrt 1995: 317.

social elite, and of citizen and slave functionaries. In ancient Egypt, the use of writing was characterized by a "principle of scarcity": writing as a technology was closely allied with the ideological and functional requirements of the state, and those possessing literate skills tended to be a restricted class of administrative officeholders who assumed their positions on a hereditary basis. In Mesopotamia, the possession of literate skills was more narrowly scribal: literate professionals belonged to the middle and lower echelons of the elite classes in Mesopotamia. Although they rarely attained the status of the "inner elite," scribes in Mesopotamia and in other regions influenced by Mesopotamian writing conventions nonetheless came from privileged social backgrounds; most scribal positions were likely inherited from other family members.

Furthermore, the ongoing discussion in the field of Egyptology and Mesopotamian studies regarding the appropriation by the elites of the highest products of culture provides a template for exploring the issue of how even the elites of the smaller, less organized and more ephemeral Iron Age states of the southern Levant sought to legitimize their status and roles through the exploitation of symbolic resources such as writing. For example, the employment of writing in tomb and burial inscriptions in Egypt and Mesopotamia, to affirm the status of the elites buried there, has strong echoes in the tomb inscriptions emerging from elite contexts in the southern Levantine region, especially in Phoenicia and Judah. Moreover, the ideological use made of royal monumental inscriptions in both Egypt and Mesopotamia is of particular relevance to the discussion of the epigraphic record of these polities. As will be examined more fully in subsequent chapters, the exploitation of writing to stress not only the critical role of the king in maintaining order, but also to make a "territorial claim to unity" over a given region was one which came to manifest itself in the development of a pan-Canaanite tradition of writing that survived the turbulent disruptions of the Late Bronze/Iron Age transition to inform the emergent scribal tradition of the Iron I Phoenician and Iron II Levantine states.

A further aspect of the elite use of writing seen especially in Egyptian tombs, palaces and temples can suggest a model for understanding the particular confluence of iconographic representations and inscriptions in the context of burials and cultic spaces in ancient Judah. This is the ancient Egyptian belief, reflected in the deliberate integration

of hieroglyphs with fully representational images, in the numinous power of art and writing magically to transform contexts. Within the context of tombs and cultic sites in Judah, much of the attestations of writing that appear to function in a similar way have often been dismissed as "graffiti," a label which has tended in the past in the field of Syro-Palestinian archaeology to emphasize the so-called "casual," non-elite and even "unofficial" quality of these types of inscriptions.

Peden's study of graffiti in ancient Egypt leads one to question the all-too-easy equation of graffiti with non-elite usage. He has demonstrated that the majority of the vast amount of graffiti emanating from the unusually graffiti-obsessed culture of pharaonic Egypt actually should be attributed to the hands of elite scribes, priests, and members of the Egyptian nobility. Far from being a "casual" act, the graffiti inscribed on temple buildings and monuments typically fulfilled an important symbolic function – to enable the inscriber to benefit spiritually from the sanctity of the place in which they made their epigraphic presence known. While the region of Judah produced nowhere near the same amount of graffiti as Egypt, the fact that its epigraphic record frequently features graffiti in similar (albeit less sophisticated) contexts suggests that it too may have played an important role in elite cultic and literate activities.

The final task undertaken in this concluding section is to describe how recent trends in the study of ancient Greek literacy have provided a model for ancient practice which can spark new and creative ways of approaching the difficult subject of literacy in ancient Judah. No grand claim is made here that Greek practice somehow winged its way across the Mediterranean to alight in the Cisjordan and affect the shape of literacy there, or vice versa. Rather, it is suggested that the model of Greek literacy in its broad outlines has relevance for the analysis of literacy in ancient Judah in two ways – methodologically and comparatively.

The methodology underlying the creation of the new Greek model of literacy has some bearing on the study of ancient Judean literacy because it suggests, first and foremost, that the form literacy takes in any given society will be unique to that society, and that the uses of writing will be determined by the varying beliefs, attitudes, and organization of that society. Even within that society there will be different forms and degrees of literacy. As H. Yunis observes, "Each kind and level of literacy is a matter of

being schooled in particular linguistic and cognitive practices,"[352] ranging, for example, from scratching a name on a potsherd to composing a letter to recording oracles in writing. It is critical, therefore, that any consideration of literacy in an ancient society focus on the uses made of writing in that culture.

As a comparative model the Greek case can provide insight into the particularities of ancient Judean practice, particularly since Judah, like Greece, was a society dominated by oral modes of communication and expression. Given the implications of the current discourse in classical studies, i.e. that the advent of writing does not kill oral modes of communication, it is therefore important to pay attention to the unique ways in which the oral and written spheres of activity interacted in Judah. Moreover, the fact that the city-states in archaic and classical Greece developed with bureaucracies that did not fully exploit the potential of writing for accomplishing all sorts of administrative and archival tasks may have some relevance for the situation of state formation in Judah as well. This lack of a document-minded or archiving mentality, which spanned several centuries in Greece, should not be looked at through the lens of Egyptian and Mesopotamian literate practices and thereby judged a failure, but instead should lead to a better appreciation of the unique and varied uses to which writing was put in that culture. And regarding the analysis of ancient Judean literacy, it should teach us to approach the material evidence for literacy in ancient Judah with an eye open to the unique ways in which writing was used in that region.

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[352] Yunis 2003: 6.

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Chapter 3

Literacy and Writing in Late Bronze and Early Iron Age Canaan
(ca. 1400 – 925 BCE)

Introduction

No assessments of literacy and writing in Canaan[353] during the Late Bronze (LB; ca. 1550-1200 BCE) and Early Iron (Iron I; ca. 1200-925 BCE) Ages can fail to address the impact of the tumultuous events that disrupted the region as well as neighboring regions (northern Levant, Anatolia) in the late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries BCE. These events, both documented in the written sources and reflected in the archaeological record, had a profound and deleterious effect on the writing industries of the entire Levantine area. Parallel to the collapse of Ugarit to the north and the destruction of many of the largest cities in Canaan were the breakdown of the sophisticated scribal institution at Ugarit and a reduction of the more limited scribal activity in the southern Levantine cities of the Amarna Letters.

While the effect of these upheavals on the economic, cultural, and political life of the Levant should not be taken too lightly, the overestimation of their magnitude has led to the creation of a rather distorted socio-historical model of the LB/Iron I transition. As commonly encountered in scholarly reconstructions of the late second millennium, this model presupposes a huge disruption in the writing activity as the inevitable result of the volatile political, economic, and social conditions. The narrative commonly runs in this way: a formerly thriving indigenous writing tradition with its northern orientation (i.e.

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[353] The term Canaan is not used here as a contrastive identity to "Israelite," as the inhabitants of Israel and Judah were among the peoples speaking the Canaanite language, preserving Canaanite culture, and continuing the Canaanite traditions. (For this distinction, see L. Grabbe 1994: 113-122 and M. Smith 2000: 327-352). Following A. Killebrew (2005) in her latest study of ethnicity and "biblical peoples," the term "Canaan" is here defined as referring to the southern Levant, and "Canaanites" as describing the ethnically diverse groups living in this region during the second millennium (p. 94).

Amarna cuneiform and Ugaritic alphabetic cuneiform) disappeared altogether following the so-called "crisis years" of the late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries BCE. Following a somewhat lengthy hiatus, a new technology of writing (linear alphabetic) was introduced that had no recollection of the earlier technological tradition. This new writing tradition possessed a completely different script as well as a distinctly southern point of origin (from Egypt via the Theban Western Desert and Sinai). This socio-historical model strikingly echoes a common narrative thread in the portrait of the Israelite settlement of Canaan as presented in the Hebrew bible. As related in the book of Joshua, the Israelites (after fleeing from Egypt through Sinai) invade Canaan, kill or drive out the inhabitants, and introduce their own social and political order to the land.

This paradigm falters when confronted with the most recent research regarding the LB/Iron I transition, i.e. that the disruption was uneven and did not impact all areas of the Levant equally. This research necessitates a more nuanced assessment of the transition that is cognizant of the continuity as well as discontinuity in the socio-political circumstances of late second millennium Palestine. This chapter will endeavor to show that, along with the undeniable disruption in the writing technologies of Palestine, there was also a certain degree of continuity in the sphere of writing and literacy: a continuity in the social categories using writing (elites) as well as a continuity with the alphabetic writing tradition already extant in Egypt, the western Sinai, and Canaan even before the "crisis years." And while discussions of the discontinuity in the writing tradition of Canaan and Syria to the north typically center on the breakdown of the Levantine scribal institutions, this chapter will investigate a less obvious but equally significant shift in the elite use of writing that accompanied this breakdown. During the MB and LB Ages, the elites of Syria-Palestine had used writing to legitimize their participation in the international system of the late second millennium; over the course of the Iron Age, the use of writing eventually turned into a process of articulating markers of ethnicity in the context of the creation of new political formations. Nevertheless, already in the LB period the alphabetic scripts of Ugarit and the Canaano-Akkadian of El-Amarna reveal that local elitist efforts to inject local ethnic identity into language symbols were underway.

To accomplish these goals, the following pages will first provide an overview of the socio-political situation in Canaan from the LB Age through the Iron I period along with a general summary of the changes and developments in writing technologies over this period. In order to contextualize this period, this section will also touch on the socio-political circumstances that obtained in the periods immediately prior and subsequent to the LB/Iron I Ages (i.e., the Middle Bronze and Iron II periods respectively). Included within this section will be a cursory examination of the influences on Levantine scribal culture that derived from the spheres of "high culture" in Egypt and Mesopotamia. It will be argued that these outside influences interacted dynamically with the indigenous writing traditions emerging in the Levantine region to create a fertile climate for the expression of distinctly local, ethnic identities later in the Iron II period.

Second, the focus will shift to the three main writing technologies that existed in LB Canaan (as well as the northern Levant): the imported writing traditions of Mesopotamian cuneiform literacy and Egyptian literacy, alphabetic cuneiform literacy, and linear alphabetic literacy. This section will trace the emergence during the LB period of two parallel alphabetic traditions, one northern and one southern, and will investigate why the northern tradition of writing was eventually dropped, and how the southern tradition with its linear alphabetic script (represented by the Proto-Canaanite, Old Canaanite, and later Phoenician inscriptions) was adopted during the Iron Age as a new expression of local identity.[354]

Third, this chapter will focus on the cities of the northern coastal region (modern-day Lebanon), those sites traditionally known as the heartland of the Phoenician region, and on their role as a bridge between the LB southern tradition of alphabetic writing and the Iron period linear alphabetic script. This section will delineate the development of the linear alphabetic script (as witnessed primarily at Byblos) and will describe how the emerging Phoenician scribal tradition informed the ways in which writing was used in the "ethnicizing" Levantine states of the subsequent Iron II period.

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[354] This study follows the distinction in terminology made by G. Hamilton (2006) between "Proto-Canaanite" and "Old Canaanite." The former term designates the earliest alphabetic inscriptions and scripts (which are largely pictographic in nature) from Egypt (Wadi el-Hol), the western Sinai, and Canaan dated to before ca. 1400 BCE, whereas the latter term refers to inscriptions whose script has a more linear character and are dated to between ca. 1400-1050 BCE.

In conclusion, this chapter will treat the archaeological data dating to the tenth century BCE for the use of writing at the inland sites of Canaan. The tenth century has often been regarded as the time during which the first state emerged in Canaan (the "United Monarchy" of Israel), and a time during which an extensive amount of writing was done by the scribal bureaucracy – both administrative and literary. The sparse character of the written evidence will be shown to have direct relevance for the question of the existence of a state in this region, and it will be suggested that the use of writing as an articulating marker of ethnicity by the new polities on both sides of the Jordan River did not transpire until the Iron II period (ninth century onwards).

Socio-political circumstances of Canaan during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages

The LB Age in Canaan followed a period of flourishing Middle Bronze Age (MB; ca. 2100-1550 BCE) settlements that boasted both fortifications and monumental architecture. These settlements exhibited an urban Syrian culture (first represented earlier in the third millennium by Tell Mardikh/Ebla) that had spread southward along the coast of Canaan and down the Rift Valley corridor in the beginning of the MB IIA period (ca. 1800 BCE).[355] The settlement patterns of the MB Age, characterized by a dominant city orbited by smaller sites and satellite settlements, persisted into the subsequent LB Age. There was, however, a reduction in the total number of sites (particularly in the number of small sites and satellite settlements outside the main cities) during the LB Age.[356] Moreover, the fortified cities of the MB period had disappeared and been replaced by "singular, central structures serving as palaces or palatial fortresses."[357] Most settlements of the LB Age did not reuse the walls that had been constructed during the MB Age, nor did they construct new walls. This development has been attributed to a

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[355] Among the prominent features of this culture are massive ramparts and city gates, the division of residential quarters of differing socio-economic status, a form of temple building that is familiar from northern Syria, and a well developed craft specialization similar to that at Ebla (cf. A. Brody 2002: 69-80).
[356] J. Baumgarten 1992: 143-150.
[357] Z. Herzog 2003: 85-96; quote found on p. 92. The MB fortifications either disappeared or were not re-used by the settlements of the LB Age. According to Herzog, the character of urbanization in LB Age Canaan had changed significantly since the MB Age. For example, most settlements of the LB Age did not reuse the walls that had been constructed during the MB Age. At those sites where excavators unearthed parts near the slope, it appears that the houses were constructed on top of the ruined remains of the MB Age city walls (Megiddo, Tel Batash, Tel Gerisa, and Lachish). The only towns in which the urban pattern of the MB Age appears to have continued into the LB Age are Megiddo and Hazor; even then, these sites do not seem to have been "mighty fortified cities" (p. 89).

possible demographic crisis during this period, a crisis that contributed to a shortage of the manpower needed to rebuild fortifications.[358]

The socioeconomic system of the LB Age that unified the population of Canaan, despite its varied origins,[359] is commonly described as a city-state or hinterland system; there were around twenty of these entities in LB Canaan.[360] The rulers of these reduced cities in the southern Levant dwelt in their modest palatial centers and frequently fought each other to extend their control beyond the boundaries of the villages and farms encircling their cities.[361] With several notable exceptions (see below), the power wielded by the local governments of these cities was shaky at best and scarcely extended beyond the confines of the city.[362] S. Bunimovitz (followed by B. Routledge for the Transjordanian region) has argued that the stresses and conflicts occasioned by the shortage of manpower are reflected by the lopsided focus on temples, palaces, and wealthy tombs at these sites, which is so out of proportion when viewed next to their small size and in light of the "limited hierarchical clustering" of the LB settlement patterns.[363]

While many of these city-states were unfortified and relatively poor, a significant number either controlled large territories, or smaller but very densely settled territories,

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[358] S. Bunimovitz 1994: 1-20. Cf. Finkelstein 1996b: 221-265, especially pp. 242-245. For the sharp demographic decline in the hill country regions during the LB Age, see Finkelstein 1988-1989: 144-146 and 1988: 338-345.

[359] See A. Killebrew 2005: 12. The significant variety of burial customs and cultic structures suggests that LB Age Palestine was replete with a number of different "ethnic" groups, rather than one single group as is commonly assumed.

[360] Y. Goren, I. Finkelstein, and N. Na'aman 2004: 320. As defined by these scholars, the city-state of the LB Canaan was "an independent territorial unit held by a local ruler who inherited his status from his ancestors and was recognized as a mayor…by the Egyptian authorities…In his relations with his subjects and neighbors he considered himself to be king (*šarru*)" (p. 322). Already established in the MB Age, the status of independence of many city-states was inherited by the rulers of the LB Age.

[361] W. Moran 1995: 559-572 and 1972: 933-935. The Tel Amarna letters record how the vassal kings of Canaan were in a state of continual unrest, always warring against each other. The main offenders were the rulers of Shechem, Lab'ayu and his sons, who tried to expand their city-state into a territorial state, with the goal of gaining control over the fertile Plain of Esdraelon. These struggles also involved Gezer, Megiddo, Taanach, Acre, Jerusalem, Lachish, and perhaps Hebron. The entire territorial-political situation in the Sharon Plain and the Jezreel Valley during the Amarna period has recently been clarified by Goren, Finkelstein, and Na'aman (2002: 221-237) in their article on the debated location of the capital cities of three prominent rulers in central Canaan.

[362] Cf. A. Joffe 2002: 425-467 and K. Whitelam 2002: 391-415.

[363] Bunimovitz 1994: 1-20; Routledge 2004: 58-86, especially p. 77.

and appear to have amassed a significant amount of wealth.[364] The territories, population, and political strength of these polities therefore varied considerably. Over-all, the evidence from surveys and excavations presents a picture of "relative poverty of the urban culture in 14th century Canaan."[365] The apparent failure to create a large amount of wealth on the part many of these Levantine city-states in the late second millennium lent them "a predictable brittleness and fragility."[366]

Over the course of the LB Age, Egyptian involvement in the southern Levant steadily increased; Egyptian dominance over the region was characterized by "a limited military occupation and direct administration" throughout the reign of Ramesses III.[367] The pharaoh stationed troops at garrison cities and administrative Egyptian personnel at several "governor's residences" in Canaan.[368] The Egyptian authorities did not interfere with the everyday affairs of the Canaanite city-states, but did expect their rulers to appear at the garrison cities for service or negotiation, and to render their tribute.[369] As attested by the more than three hundred letters comprising the el-Amarna archive in Egypt and dating to the early-mid fourteenth century BCE,[370] the Egyptian rulers engaged in an active correspondence with most of the population centers of Canaan and the

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[364] Goren, Finkelstein, and Na'aman 2004: 320; Finkelstein 1996b: 242-243. Among the city-states that controlled large- (ca. 2500 sq. km) or medium-sized (ca. 1000 sq. km) territories were Shechem and Jerusalem (for the latter, see also Na'aman 1996b: 17-27) in the highlands, Hazor in Galilee, and Gezer and Lachish in southern Canaan. Among those which controlled a relatively small amount of territory (ca. 600 sq. km), but one which was densely settled, were Ashkelon and Acco along the Canaanite coast, Gath in southern Canaan, Megiddo and Shim'on in the northern plains.

[365] Goren, Finkelstein, and Na'aman 2004: 321.

[366] Joffe 2002: 428.

[367] Killebrew 2005: 81. In her disagreement with C. Higginbotham (1996: 154-169) over the nature of the Egyptian presence in Canaan, Killebrew follows D. Redford (2000: 1-20). Higginbotham argues that the Egyptians did not practice a policy of imperialism in western Asia, but that the Egyptian-style material found in Canaan reflects the phenomenon of elite emulations and a less direct Egyptian intervention. Conversely, Killebrew believes that the material culture at several key sites in Canaan, which includes the presence of Egyptian-style locally produced ceramics and architecture that is very "Egyptian" in nature, reflects the Egyptian policy of sending out "envoys" to serve as administrators or military personnel (Killebrew 2005: 11).

[368] The network of garrison cities included four on the coast (Gaza, Jaffa, Ullasa and Sumur), one city (Beth-shean) in northern Canaan, and another (Kumidi) located on the major crossroad of the Beqa' of Lebanon.

[369] Goren, Finkelstein, and Na'aman 2004: 322.

[370] The Tell el-Amarna letters are named after a plain on the east bank of the Nile about 190 miles south of Cairo, al-ʿAmārna. Spanning a period from around 1385/1375-1355 BCE, these tablets date to the last decade of the reign of Amenophis III, the 17-year reign of Amenophis IV, and the three or four years before Tutankhaten (Tutankhamun) abandoned the capital Akhetaten (see Moran 1972: 933-935).

Transjordan,[371] including Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, Beth Shean, Pella,[372] Shechem, Gaza, and Jerusalem.[373] The Amarna Letters represent a crucial discovery for the history of writing in Canaan during the LB Age, as they illuminate the presence of a limited yet active scribal culture in the southern Levant as late as the fourteenth century, shortly before the LB crisis of the thirteenth century and beyond.

In an essay contrasting the socio-political organization of the Levant during the LB period with the rise of secondary states in that region later in the Iron II period, A. Joffe connects the creation of a scribal class in Bronze Age Palestine with the need of the ruling elites to communicate in diplomatic correspondence with Akkadian cuneiform as the *lingua franca*. Who were these ruling elites? According to Joffe, the sets of identity that existed in these second millennium city-states consisted primarily of a local identity, and above that, the "detailed and all-encompassing" elite culture of the palaces and ruling

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[371] Egypt, who ruled Jordan during the entire LB period, brought the region (first and foremost Pella) into the international trade network. The region may have been divided, like Canaan to the west, into city-states, each with a kind of king or Egyptian *mukhtar* (J. Strange 2001: 291-321). Jordan has yielded a few hieroglyphic inscriptions on monuments, seals, and seal impressions dating to the LB Age. The most important inscription is the Balu' stela from the thirteenth or early twelfth century. Despite its modest size, the Balu' stela represents an attempt to produce a monumental Egyptian inscription and as such probably functioned as a prestige symbol of some local ruler in Jordan (K.A. Kitchen 1992: 21-34).

[372] El-Amarna Letter 256, discovered in Egypt along with the rest of the el-Amarna letters, contains a reference to Pella that implies there was someone there who could read. This supposition is strengthened by the discovery of two fragments of cuneiform tablets dating to the early LB Age period (1550-1450 BCE) at Pella that provide evidence for the knowledge of cuneiform writing at Pella (cf. Strange 2001: 314 and Millard 2001: 659). The site of Ashtartu (Tall 'Ashtara) in Jordan is mentioned in Letter 256 and in one other (no. 197). Furthermore, another letter (n. 204) may have been sent from Qanawat (Qanu). "Since the senders of several letters have not been identified," writes Millard in an essay on writing in Jordan (2001: 659-662), "there may have been other towns in Jordan with scribes writing and reading cuneiform in the Late Bronze Age" (p. 659).

[373] Since the Amarna Letters refer to the "land of Jerusalem" and to its "towns," some scholars have held that Jerusalem served as capital of an Egyptian vassal city-state comparable in size and strength to other entities in the region (see especially Na'aman 1996b: 17-27). On the basis of the fact that the structures such as those uncovered in Kenyon's Square A/I and Shiloh's Area G continued to stand directly on the bedrock in the Late Bronze Age as in the previous Early and Middle Bronze Ages, J. Cahill has even suggested that "the occupational character of the Late Bronze Age settlement did not differ significantly from the occupational character of the preceding periods" (Cahill 2003: 13-80; quote found on pg. 33). M. Steiner (2003: 347-363), on the other hand, based on her assessment of the MB remains in the City of David (excavated by K. Kenyon), does not believe the Jerusalem settlement (i.e. Urusalim) to have been a fortified town, but instead a baronial estate ("a royal dominion of the pharaoh, with Abdi-heba as his steward, [living] in a fortified house somewhere near the spring, on top of the hill, or on the mount of Olives", pg. 351). Killebrew (2003: 329-345) agrees with Steiner that Jerusalem did not possess a city fortification wall from the sixteenth to the mid-eighth centuries BCE, but she regards Cahill's arguments regarding the habitation of the City of David during the LB Age to be more convincing than Steiner's arguments to the contrary (see pg. 338 in particular). She therefore describes Jerusalem as a city during the fourteenth-thirteenth centuries BCE, albeit an unfortified one. In this way, Jerusalem fits the general trend of unfortified cities in LB Canaan.

elites.[374] The participants in this elite culture strove to maintain the appearance of legitimacy in the international system by attempting to amass wealth and by communicating across language and dialect boundaries with the aid of the scribal class.[375]

Because of the use of Akkadian by this scribal class, it is easy enough to see the emergence and use of writing in the Levant as just another instance in which Mesopotamian forms of literacy were transmitted from the Mesopotamian core to outlying regions in conjunction with the spread of Mesopotamian power. As in other regions under the influence of Mesopotamia, however, the shape of literacy in Canaan did not entirely conform to the Mesopotamian model. A close examination of the Amarna Letters as well as of the contemporary epigraphic witnesses to the production of writing found in Canaan (as offered below) reveals that the scripts developed and uses conceived for writing in Canaan evidence a curious amalgam of Mesopotamian forms of literacy and a nascent local tradition of writing and literacy.

This tendency to express a local identity through writing, or better to construct a distinctive scribal language, is also in evidence at sites just north of Canaan, in what is now Syria.[376] There, in contrast with the relatively young and immature scribal institutions in Canaan, more advanced and erudite scribal institutions had long been active in places like Ugarit and Ebla. The best documented scribal culture of the LB period existed at Ugarit, a relatively cosmopolitan city on the northern Levantine coast, where extensive trade and other international contacts were facilitated by a cadre of highly trained scribes.   These scribes adapted the Mesopotamian technology of writing with wedges on clay to express a local written language, Ugaritic, by assigning a limited number of signs to consonants and to a glottal stop (or aleph) joined with one of three vowels.[377] An analogous situation may have occurred previously (in the mid-third

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[374] Joffe 2002: 428-239.

[375] If Bunimovitz (1994) is correct that the territorial expansion by several city-states should be seen as motivated by a deficit of manpower, then it would appear that the elite also sought to maintain legitimacy by controlling more of the population. Cf. Joffe 2002: 428 and Finkelstein 1996b: 244-245.

[376] Curiously, there is some indication that an attempt was made to create a written language indigenous to Jordan at Tel Deir 'Alla during the LB Age (see Millard 2001: 659-662; cf. Strange 2001: 291-321). Excavators found eleven tablets in the debris of the shrine at Deir 'Alla bearing undeciphered signs that attest, in the words of Millard, an "abortive scribal experiment" (pg. 659).

[377] The Ugaritic tablets did not belong to Mesopotamian cuneiform tradition: they were written from left to right (rather than from right to left), and the script consisted of only thirty different signs (see M. Dietrich and O. Loretz 1999: 81).

millennium) at Ebla, where distinct "Eblaite" peculiarities were embedded in their written texts. For letters, rituals, magical charms, and everyday administrative accounts, the scribes at Ebla applied Sumerian cuneiform to the Semitic Eblaite language.[378] To make matters even more complicated at Ebla, it appears that "Eblaite" was very likely never the vernacular of Ebla, but instead represented a writing convention adopted from another place somewhere in Northern Babylonia.[379]

The traditional break identified by scholars of the ANE between the LB and Iron I periods in 1200 BCE was actually represented in the southern Levant by at least a century of decline and disruption. Following the Amarna period (early-mid fourteenth century BCE) and a time during which Egyptian attention to Canaan intensified (thirteenth century BCE), the Egyptian presence began to weaken at the end of Ramesses III's reign (mid-twelfth century BCE).[380] Around the eastern Mediterranean, huge destructions took place at most of the main centers, including those on Cyprus.[381] Ugarit was completely destroyed by some unnamed enemy, perhaps the people groups whose destructive activities are described in a few documents from Ugarit and from Hatti.[382] The main centers of lowland Canaan met the same fate as Ugarit: Megiddo, Beth-shean, Lachish, Hazor, and Ashdod were demolished. With the dismantlement of the great power centers in the thirteenth century, local contacts replaced the international lines of communication between empires that had by then broken down. This development readily led to "the fragmentation of Canaan into smaller regionally defined units."[383]

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[378] P. Michalowski 2003: 451-478. The major Ebla archive contained a broad range of archival tablets written in Sumerian and Akkadian as well as Eblaite.

[379] Cf. J. Krecher (1993: 498-507) and Michalowski (1987a: 165-175). Since personal names in the vernacular of Ebla appear to be in a Semitic language, it can be assumed that Ebla used Semitic as one of its vernacular languages (if not its primary, or only one).

[380] Cf. Killebrew 2005: 81-83; Redford 2000: 1-20; Weinstein 1992: 142-150. By the end of the reign of Ramesses VI (1143-1136 BCE), Egypt had withdrawn completely from southern Canaan (Finkelstein 2000: 158-180). The late twelfth and eleventh centuries likewise saw a sharp deterioration in Egypt's contacts with most of the eastern Mediterranean areas. Egypt's involvement in the Aegean and Cyprus (as well as inland Canaan) declined quite severely; mercantile activity between Egypt and its trading partners in the Aegean and Cyprus all but ceased (Weinstein 1998: 188-196).

[381] The main Cypriot centers were destroyed during this period, including Enkomi, Hala Sultan Tekke, Sinda, and Kition (Killebrew 2005: 21-49).

[382] See I. Singer, "A Political History of Ugarit" (1999: 603-733).

[383] Killebrew 2005: 27-28.

A vaguely-defined group of people known as the "Sea Peoples" has long been held as one of the primary causes of this LB/Iron I disruption.[384] According to the traditional scenario, colonizing groups of Aegean background flooded into the southern coastal plain of Canaan at some point during the twelfth century and rapidly constructed large new urban centers that are known collectively as Philistia.[385] But the similarities in the material-cultural record between what are called areas of "Sea People" settlement (e.g. Cyprus, the southern coastal plain of Canaan) may be less a reflection of similar ethnicity than due to the creation of an "eastern Mediterranean coastally based economic and cultural community" in the twelfth century BCE.[386] A close link between the Cypriote and Philistine regions is suggested by the strong resemblance of the material culture of the urban settlements of the Philistines with that of Cyprus during the twelfth century BCE.[387]

Although the disruption experienced by the Levant during the thirteenth and twelfth century was significant, the data gleaned from archaeological excavations and surveys demonstrates that this process of decline was uneven throughout the region, and that there was no major cultural and ethnic break between the beginning of the Iron Age in Canaan and the end of the LB Age.[388] Despite the collapse of "the international system and its interdependent network of city-states," the period of time from ca. 1300 to 900 BCE saw a continuation of many Old Canaanite forms, including the partial re-establishment of the palatial society during the tenth century.[389] The area of Phoenicia on the coast appears to have successfully navigated the transition from the LB to Iron I

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[384] Scholars have assigned the collapse of the structures of the LB Age to a variety of culprits, from natural disasters, to climatic changes, technological innovations (such as the superior military technology of migrating people groups), an internal systems collapse, and/or the cyclical rise and collapse of urban cultures (for a helpful summary of these possible causes, see Killebrew 2005: 33-37).

[385] T. Dothan 2000: 145-158, 1998: 148-161, and 1989: 1-22. Cf. Finkelstein (2000: 158-180), who assigns the date for the colonization of the southern coastal plain by the Philistines to ca. 1135 (which accords with the low chronological schema that he has articulated in several articles).

[386] S. Sherratt 1998: 292-313; quote found on p. 294.

[387] *Ibid*, 302. Killebrew (2005) also has made this observation, but she attributes it to the fact that the Sea Peoples who colonized the southern coastal plain were a completely new ethnic group and that they came from Cyprus, rather than from the west Aegean or Crete (pp. 14-16).

[388] Whitelam 2002: 395-6. In the Transjordan region, the transition from the LB Age to the Iron Age was apparently one of "peaceful continuity," as several sites on the plateau (Abila (?), 'Amman, the Baq'ah Valley, Umm ad-Dananir, al-Fukhar, Irbid, Jarash, Safut (?), Sahab, and al-'Umayri) and in the Jordan Valley (Pella and as-Sa'idiyya) continued to be inhabited without interruption (cf. P. Bienkowski 1992: 1-12 and L. Herr and M. Najjar 2001: 323-345).

[389] Joffe 2002: 431.

period with little if any disruption.[390] Documentary sources attest to an active relationship between Egypt and the Phoenician coast in the early eleventh century.[391] A similarly smooth transition took place at Carchemish and Melid to the north of Canaan.[392]

Furthermore, Cyprus evidently experienced a widespread (if not total) continuity between the thirteenth (Late Cypriot IIC phase) and succeeding twelfth (Late Cypriot IIIA phase) centuries.[393] The prosperity and large size of the Cypriot city-states and the prevalence of Cypriot products reflects Cyprus' growing role in the maritime trade system as the link between regions around the Mediterranean over the course of the thirteenth century.[394] As mentioned briefly above, Sherratt has argued that the "Sea Peoples" phenomenon of the late thirteenth and twelfth centuries should be connected with the newly institutionalized activity of the coastal urban centers of Cyprus (rather than with a nebulous invading or colonizing group of immigrants arriving on Cyprus from the Aegean). By the beginning of the twelfth century, these "Sea Peoples" had subverted the "centrally controlled, formal, elite exchange systems" by inaugurating and maintaining "a type of aggressively open economy."[395] In other words, Cyprus as well as several Levantine coastal areas, particularly what is termed by scholars the "Philistine strip," actually benefited from the breakdown of elite control over international trade.[396]

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[390] The excavation of Tel Dor directed by E. Stern indicates that the site, with its fortified urban center and developed port, continued without major interruption from the Late Bronze Age through Iron II (Gilboa and Sharon 2003: 1-75). L. Badre (2000: 941-961) considers the fortifications found in Beirut to date to the Iron I period, but U. Finkbeiner (2002: 27-36) assigns them a later date. The archaeological data from most other coastal cities (most notably Tyre and Sarepta) in Iron I are still mute on this issue.

[391] Cf. the Report of Wenamun from the very end of the Twentieth Dynasty (ca. 1070 BCE) and the approximately contemporary Onomasticon of Amenemope. The former makes reference to a total of seventy ships in the harbors at Byblos and Sidon that are trading with Smendes at Tanis. The latter also testifies to Egyptian contacts with inland Syria, as the text lists a number of Syrian cities, including Carchemish, Kadesh, and Byblos. Furthermore, excavators at Deir el-Medineh have discovered an ostracon containing a brief Phoenician text written in hieratic. This document represents the oldest Phoenician text known from Egypt; it describes a transaction involving a goat (Ostracon Cairo 25759; A. Shisha-Halevy 1978: 145-162). On the other hand, the extremely sparse array of excavated materials from the Phoenician coast and inland Syria contain almost no Egyptian materials. See Weinstein 1998: 188-196.

[392] See J.D. Hawkins 1995: 87-101.

[393] See G. Cadogan 1998: 6-16. M. Iacovou in the same volume of essays (1998: 332-344) presents an alternative view, which interprets the Hellenizing of Cyprus during the twelfth century as evidence of a wave of Aegean immigrants.

[394] Maritime trade did not collapse during the late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries, asserts Killebrew; rather, Cypriot dominance of this trade, with the weakening of the Hittite empire, represented "a restructuring of economic control in core-periphery relations" (2005: 42).

[395] Sherratt 1998: 301.

[396] *Ibid*, 37.

This thesis has important implications for the question of continuity versus discontinuity in the "Philistine strip" and other coastal areas of the southern Levant: given the evidence for close and regular contact between this coastal region and Cyprus from the latter part of the thirteenth century throughout much of the twelfth century BCE,[397] there may have been no significant wave of migrations and settlements along the southern Levantine coast from the west (as is usually argued).[398] The material-cultural similarities in those areas conventionally believed to have been settled by the "Sea Peoples" actually may be a reflection *not* of genetic or linguistic ethnicity but instead of the creation and maintenance of a decentralized economic system by the cosmopolitan coastal city dwellers of the east Mediterranean (spearheaded by the "coastal moguls of Cyprus"). If Sherratt's overthrow of the conventional picture of the "Sea Peoples" is to be credited (and she makes a very convincing case for it), then the notion that the southern coastal plains of Canaan experienced a marked disruption during the twelfth century (thanks to waves of invaders or refugees) must be abandoned.[399]

What of the issue of continuity versus discontinuity in the writing activity of Canaan across the LB/Iron I transition? It has already been observed that the classic view holds to a marked disruption in the technology of writing during this period. But as will be examined in more detail below, there are indications that the limited scribal culture extant in Canaan during the late second millennium actually continued on into the first millennium and ended up influencing the fledgling scribal institutions of the later Iron II

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[397] Sherratt observes that: "The urban centers of the Philistine strip, of the area around the Bay of Acco, and of the coast at least as far up as Ras ibn Hani show some very similar signs of industrial and economic activity as those characteristic of the Cypriot cities in their 13th-12th century urban heyday" (p. 302).

[398] The assumption that contacts with Cyprus ceased shortly before 1200 BCE is largely an illusion based on the disappearance of imports of easily recognized Cypriot handmade wares. Sherratt attributes the disappearance of these imports to the fact that they were already in the thirteenth century being phased out on Cyprus both as domestic and export pottery, and that they were gradually being "displaced by the growth of wheelmade plain and decorated pottery produced not in the traditional locations of such handmade production but in the urban coastal centers" (p. 304).

[399] Also suggestive in this regard is the discovery of Cypro-Minoan inscriptions dating both to the LB and to the Iron I Ages at Ashkelon (F.M. Cross and L. Stager 2006: 129-159). One ostracon and eighteen jar handles inscribed with this language were unearthed by the Leon Levy Expedition: five of the inscribed handles came from amphorae and jugs manufactured on Cyprus and were dated securely to thirteenth—early twelfth century BCE contexts; the ostracon and the other twelve jar handles were found in or near domestic quarters, dating from the twelfth—eleventh centuries BCE. The presence of these Cypro-Minoan inscriptions suggests the continuation of contacts between these two regions spanning the period of the LB/Iron I crisis. (By the tenth century BCE, the inhabitants of the "Philistine strip" had abandoned this non-Semitic language in favor of the alphabetic writing system.)

kingdoms. At least initially, however, the limited corpus of epigraphic texts dating from the twelfth-ninth centuries BCE does not testify to a great broadening in the uses of writing. Furthermore, up until the late ninth century, the Old Canaanite script displays little regional variation, i.e. no distinct division into different national languages and scripts. The use of alphabetic writing as a significant marker of ethnicity does not appear to have begun until the Iron II period. Indeed, the regional phenomenon identified by Joffe and others of "ethnic" or "secondary" state formation as a characteristic of the first millennium in the southern Levant did not apparently get underway until the ninth century at the very earliest (contra Joffe).[400]

Instead, (as mentioned above), the first several hundred years of the Iron Age are characterized by the continuation of Late Bronze Age material culture and political forms, (particularly in the coastal and lowland sites), and by shifts in population and the emergence of numerous rural settlements in the central hill country, a process which had occurred at least twice before, during the Early Bronze I and Middle Bronze II periods.[401] The predominant trend at the end of the second millennium was ruralization: beginning around 1200 BCE, the highlands on both sides of the Jordan River saw the establishment of many small rural sites.[402] The sites in the Transjordan and the central hill country display close material-cultural connections during the twelfth and eleventh centuries.[403] Killebrew attributes the increase of population movements and contacts between Cisjordan and Transjordan to the sharp downturn in Egyptian influence and accompanying disintegration of LB Age urban centers, since these latter developments "removed restrictions and control over indigenous populations."[404]

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[400] There is little archaeological or epigraphic evidence to suggest that new ethnic or "ethnicizing" states such as Joffe describes were beginning to coalesce before the ninth century; clear signs of the development of discrete ethnic ideologies, including the rise of "linguistic nationalism," are lacking in the region until that point.

[401] Finkelstein 1994: 150-178. In this 1994 article, Finkelstein has tracked a cyclical process whereby three waves of settlement by indigenous groups in the central hill country were followed by two periods of decline in the third and second millennia BCE.

[402] Bienkowski 1992: 1-12; Finkelstein 1994: 150-178 and 1988-1989: 146-151; Herr and Najjar 2001: 323-345; cf. Joffe 2002: 437; Killebrew 2005:149-196; and Whitelam 2002: 396-400.

[403] For example, Tel el-'Umayri, one of the earliest Iron I highland sites in the Cisjordan, possessed a material culture that finds its closest parallels in the highlands north of Jerusalem, especially in the region of Shechem (Mount Ebal Stratum 2) (L. Herr 1998: 251-264). The development of el-'Umayri appears to have been closely connected with the early Iron I developments in the northern central hill country (Killebrew 2005: 168).

[404] Killebrew 2005: 171.

The archaeological evidence likewise reveals that the settlement patterns in western Palestine were paralleled by those in Jordan. In both regions, small hamlets "with irregular plans and enclosure walls" proliferated during the Iron I period;[405] larger fortified settlements existed in both Samaria and in the northern Transjordan by the twelfth century. Settlement appears to have spread steadily southwards through the course of the Iron Age.[406] The cultural assemblages and lack of fortifications at those sites in the southern hill country of Canaan (as well as across the Jordan River in central Transjordan)[407] points to a population whose economy was largely based on range-tied pastoralism.

There is little about the settlements in the central hill country that can be positively identified as exclusively "Israelite": LB Age Canaanite traditions regarding material culture, cultic practices, burial customs, and architecture continued on into the Iron I period.[408] What the central hill-country complex does show is a certain degree of homogeneity in this early period, at least with reference to its ceramic assemblage; Iron I highland pottery displays both a continuity with LB ceramic traditions as well as a "distinctive limited repertoire of shapes ... and their modes of production."[409] These ceramic characteristics along with other distinctive features of the archaeological record in the Iron I highlands (that distinguish it from the LB Age and Iron I lowlands material culture) indicate not only the presence of a fairly closed trading system but also the growing ideological tendencies of the highland village settlements to distinguish themselves from their neighbors. [410] Thus, the growing trend among experts is to identify these rural settlers as a mixed population with Canaanite origins who increasingly developed a self-aware isolation that is reflected in the difference in settlement size, in

[405] The continuous and even growing settlement patterns during the Iron I period, as indicated by surveys, has recently been called into question by A. Faust (2003: 147-161). On the basis of excavations, he argues for a disjunction in occupation of many rural Iron I sites by the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the tenth century, before the Iron II villages had yet been established.
[406] This is particularly evident in the case of Transjordan: Ammon (northern Transjordan) experienced an increase in settlement at the end of the LB Age and in the Iron I period; new sites appeared during the Iron I in Moab (central Transjordan); Edom (southern Transjordan) did not see any significant settlement until the Iron II. See Bienkowski 1992: 1-12; Killebrew 2005: 165-169; and Herr and Najjar: 323-345.
[407] See J.A. Dearman 1992: 65-75 and Ø. LaBianca and R. Younker 1998: 399-416.
[408] See E. Bloch-Smith 2003: 401-425; cf. Finkelstein 1994: 150-178 and Whitelam 2002: 391-415 (especially pg. 397-8).
[409] Killebrew 2005: 177 and 185.
[410] Cf. Killebrew 2005: 149-196, R. Miller 2005: 82-90, 97-103 and 2004: 56.

the ceramic repertoire, and in certain cultic practices.[411] As Killebrew writes, "These population groups formed the ethnogenesis of what was later to become the people identified as Israel."[412]

Beginning in the twelfth century, the highland settlers began to organize new agro-pastoral villages and devise various strategies for expanding domestic groups in order to facilitate the exploitation of the environment. These developments are suggested by the archaeological evidence: over the course of the Iron I period, the sites in the central hill country display similar trends[413] – they become larger and more organized, and are characterized by more storage facilities (such as silos) and social architecture (such as the huge structures at 'En Hagit and Tell 'En Zippori). The creation of larger social networks within these rural societies enabled them to survive in the unpredictable environments of the Levant, and to subsist even during periods of drought, through the foundation of mutual obligation and social storage.

The establishment of active trading networks between the hill country sites as well as evidence for limited trade with foreign groups to obtain sumptuary goods (such as silver, iron, basalt, and Phoenician or coastal pottery) suggests the presence of elite groups within these societies who were mobilizing subsistence goods for redistribution as well as sumptuary goods in order to display their power. These features of hill country settlement support R. Miller's application of the complex chiefdom model to the highland societies of twelfth-eleventh century Palestine.[414] Based on "ethnographic evidence from diverse cultures,"[415] this model describes a society in which there is more than one level of control above the kin level (i.e. intermediate levels of "subchiefs" between the paramount chief and the people). According to Miller, a society characterized as a complex chiefdom has entered a phase which immediately precedes its formation into a state.

The development of the highland society as well as other societies in the Levant and Transjordan region into more state-like entities was slow in coming, however. The

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[411] Cf. Bloch-Smith 2003: 401-425; Finkelstein 1994: 150-178; and Killebrew 2005: 149-196.
[412] Killebrew 2005: 13.
[413] Mazar 1994: 39-57. Cf. Finkelstein 1994: 150-178; Joffe 2002: 438, and Whitelam 2002: 396-400.
[414] Miller 2005 (*Chieftains of the Highland Clans, A History of Israel in the Twelfth and Eleventh Centuries B.C.*).
[415] *Ibid*, xiv.

archaeological data cannot support the theory of a tenth-century state centered on Jerusalem and encompassing much of modern-day Palestine.[416] As far as the situation in the northern valleys during the tenth century is concerned, the data points to "a revival of the Canaanite cultural and territorio-political system of the second millennium B.C.E."[417] Finkelstein has termed this late Iron I revival of LB type centers "New Canaan," and he attributes the prosperity of this short-lived entity to the stability of the rural sector and to the dynamic trade with Phoenicia, Cyprus, and elsewhere. A number of urban centers that had been destroyed during the LB/Iron I transition experienced a Canaanite reoccupation in the tenth century, including Tel Rehov, Tel Kinneret, Tel Dor (and possibly Tel Keisan on the coast), and most notably, Megiddo. Finkelstein argues that Megiddo maintained its Late Bronze identity as the center of a city-state which dominated the rural territories around it.[418]

The highland region to the north and south experienced a strong wave of settlement; the southern highlands saw intensive settlement activity in the "City of David" and a steady growth in the number of settlements, both to the south and to the north of the city.[419] Still, in comparison with later periods the hill country around

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[416] Cf. Finkelstein 2003a: 81-101 and 2003b: 75-83; Na'aman 1997: 43-47, 67 and 1996a: 170-186; Steiner 2001: 280-288; and Whitelam 2002: 391-415. The tenth century in the southern Levant continues to be described by scholars in dramatically disparate ways. Differences over the dating of ceramic assemblages have led to a sharp divergence in the dating of strata and buildings traditionally assigned to the "Solomonic" era, such as Megiddo IVB-VA, Hazor X, and the six-chambered gate of Gezer VIII (See Finkelstein 1999: 35-52, 1998: 167-174, 1996a: 177-187 versus Mazar 2003b:85-98, 1997: 157-167, A. Ben-Tor 2000: 9-16, and Ben-Tor and Ben-Ami 1998: 1-37). The "Low Chronology," as proposed by Israel Finkelstein, advances these levels to the ninth century, the period of the Omride dynasty; the most vocal proponents of the more traditional chronology are convinced from the stratigraphic data from Hazor, Tel Rehov, and other sites that Finkelstein and others have misread the pottery assemblages. Regardless of whether or not one decides to attribute certain monumental structures to the tenth or ninth centuries, the crux of the matter is the obvious lack of elements central to the materialization of a state: the relative absence of (1) a reorganization of space and labor, and (2) monumental inscriptions, inscribed or decorated objects (such as seals), representational art, and evidence for the development of economic structures such as standardization and exchange (weights and measures). And if the Low Chronology proves to be an accurate reading of the data, then the tenth century loses the only feature which may reflect the deliberate exploitation of labor by the state, *viz.* the construction of administrative sites.

[417] Finkelstein 2003a: 90. Cf. also Whitelam 2002: 394-400 and Finkelstein 2003b: 85-98. The main centers of this "New Canaan" (according to the Low Chronology) were Megiddo VIA, Iron I Tel Rehov, Tell Kinneret, Tel Dor and possibly Tell Keisan on the coast. Finkelstein (2003a) maintains that these sites were centers of city-states, and he writes that "Almost all features of their material culture – pottery, metallurgical, and architectural traditions; layout of the main cities; and settlement patterns in the countryside – show clear continuation of the second millennium traditions" (p. 90).

[418] See Finkelstein 2003b: 75-83.

[419] Ofer 2001: 14-37.

Jerusalem was only sparsely settled, and Jerusalem itself appears to have been "no more than a small settlement limited to the old Bronze Age mound of the City of David."[420]

Na'aman and others have described the situation in the southern highlands as "Amarna-like," in that Jerusalem apparently functioned as a "small, fortified citadel that may have served as a tribal center for the immediate region."[421] Steiner, based on the results of K. Kenyon's excavations in Jerusalem (1961-67), which she together with Franken in Leiden have been working on publishing, characterizes tenth and ninth century Jerusalem as a "small town, occupied mainly by public buildings," with little or no room for residential areas.[422] It is therefore highly unlikely that Jerusalem served as the capital of a large state; instead, it closely resembled other towns of the tenth and ninth centuries, such as Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer, and Lachish. At some point during these two centuries, all of these towns featured similar characteristics, including large fortifications,[423] ashlar masonry, public buildings, and scarcely any ordinary houses.

It was not the Iron I period, but the beginning of the Iron II period that saw the emergence of those demographic patterns and cultural traits that would characterize the southern Levant until the first half of the sixth century BCE. Beginning in the mid-late ninth century, the political configuration of the southern Levant began to shift with the rise of small, regional polities along the eastern Mediterranean, which was accompanied by a proliferation of inscribed materials. The emergence of increasingly culturally integrated, small ethnic states was a new phenomenon in the region, and it was a trend which would continue to gain momentum throughout the entire Iron period.

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[420] Finkelstein 2003a: 83. Cf. also Ussishkin 2003: 103-116 and R. Reich and E. Shukron 2003: 209-218.
[421] Killebrew 2003: 324. Cf. Finkelstein 2003b: 85-98; Na'aman 1997: 43-47, 67 and 1996b: 17-27.
[422] Steiner 2001: 283 and 2003: 347-363. An opposing view is given by Cahill (2003: 13-80), who represents the minority in arguing that the City of David was an important town in the tenth century BCE (based upon her reading of the "latest" data from Yigal Shiloh's excavations in the City of David).
[423] As far as fortifications in Jerusalem are concerned, however, Reich and Shukron (2003: 209-218) have recently noted a lack of significant fortifications from the LB Age through the ninth century. Cahill (2003: 21f.) has argued for the reuse of the MB Age fortification system in the LB age through the Iron Ages, including the tenth century, but this suggestion lacks any archaeological evidence. Steiner (2003: 348-351), followed by Killebrew (2003: 332-335), agrees that Jerusalem did not possess a city fortification wall from the sixteenth to mid-eighth centuries BCE. Nevertheless, there is evidence for a limited fortification system protecting a citadel and administrative buildings at the very top of the hill – an earth-filled terrace system, constructed in the twelfth century (Cahill 2003: 33f., Killebrew 2003: 341, Steiner 2003: 352-359). There is disagreement, however, as to whether the terraces were built at the same time as a stepped stone structure, with the former providing a substructure for the latter (see Cahill 2003: 33f. and Killebrew 2003: 341-343), or whether the stepped stone structure was a later and separate addition, added sometime in the tenth or early ninth century BCE (Steiner 2003: 352-359).

Cuneiform Writing Technology

The earliest attestations of writing discovered to date in the southern Levant – the fragments of cuneiform tablets uncovered at various sites throughout the region – date to the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2100-1550 BCE and more specifically, to the Middle Bronze II or Old Babylonian period, eighteenth-sixteenth centuries BCE).[424] This Middle Bronze II (MBII) period is the time of the international system best represented in the Mari archives from Syria. Indeed, several texts from Hazor dating to this period (Hazor 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 12) show evidence of contact with the Mari tradition.[425] The presence of these texts and the fact that none of the cuneiform texts from Canaan date earlier than the MBII Age suggests that Hazor was the portal through which cuneiform was introduced into Canaan via Mari around the time of Ibni-Addu, Zimri-Lim and Hammurabi.[426] These texts from Hazor (as well as cuneiform texts dating to later periods) reveal the formation of a scribal community at Hazor whose interests were primarily focused on commerce and administration (although not exclusively; see below p. 138).

A second group of tablets dating to the later MB II Age, older than the Taanach tablets and the Amarna texts (LB Age) but later than the time of the Hazor-Mari contacts, "show signs of a scribal tradition influenced by the local linguistic environment of Canaan and the cuneiform west."[427] This development may signal a slow loosening of the ties that connected the scribes of MB Age Canaan with their Syrian and Mesopotamian colleagues. Furthermore, over half of the cuneiform tablets found in Canaan are dated to the LB Age, based in many cases on the epigraphic and linguistic similarities of these tablets to the Amarna archive.[428] These texts include remnants of

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[424] Most of the objects bearing cuneiform inscriptions are clay cuneiform tablets, but the corpus includes other inscribed items, including cylinder seals and clay liver models. More than one third of the inscribed objects come from three sites: Taanach (seventeen), Hazor (fifteen), and Aphek (eight). For a bibliographical list of the corpus, see W. Horowitz, T. Oshima, and S. Sanders 2002: 755-761.

[425] Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 12.

[426] W. Horowitz, T. Oshima, and S. Sanders 2006: 12-13. These scholars suggest that the introduction of cuneiform in Canaan was geared towards facilitating trade between Hazor and the cities of Syria and Mesopotamia.

[427] *Ibid*, 13.

[428] Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 7. That a few scribes were active even in an out-of-the-way region of the southern hill country is suggested by the discovery of a LB cuneiform text at Tell er-Rumeidah (most likely the site of ancient Hebron). This text appears to be an administrative tablet recording sacrifices (M. Anbar and N. Na'aman 1986-87: 3-12).

what were probably archival groups at Taanach (late fifteenth century BCE)[429] and Aphek (second half of the thirteenth century BCE), materials with affinities to the Amarna archives, as well as some miscellaneous texts. By this point in the LB Age, the cuneiform letters and administrative tablets found in Canaan documented local activities, and cuneiform represented the primary means of communicating with Egypt as well.

These epigraphic discoveries from the MB and LB Ages reflect a time when an emergent scribal tradition in the main settlement centers of Canaan and Syria looked eastwards towards Mesopotamia.[430] At the LB site of Ugarit, scribes were cognizant of their membership in a scribal guild rooted in Mesopotamia, as is clear by the use of expressions such as "servant of Nabu and Nisaba" written in some colophons.[431] As at Ugarit and other regions influenced by Mesopotamian writing practices, scribal training may have accompanied scribal activity at several sites in Canaan.[432] This training is suggested by the discovery of a rather high proportion of lexical material (around four out of about forty texts, around one-tenth of the total) coming from three different sites (Aphek, Ashkelon, and Hazor).[433] This indicates that not all of the scribes active in Canaanite sites were trained in the north;[434] some likely received at least part of their scribal education at the settlements in which they worked.

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[429] The earliest tablets from the Amarna archives are dated a bit later than the Taanach tablets; these are the letters of Amenophis III (1386-13149 BCE).

[430] The transmission of the cuneiform writing tradition from Mesopotamia to regions under its influence is a phenomenon first attested in the west at the western Syrian site of Ebla, where an important archive dating to the middle of the third millennium was found.

[431] J. Vita 1999: 455-498. Furthermore, the form of the documents demonstrates a great familiarity with Mesopotamian culture, yet also "a certain degree of independence and originality" in relation to the models from Mesopotamia (pg. 471).

[432] Both at the EB site of Ebla and at LB Age Ugarit, excavators have uncovered numerous bilingual and trilingual texts that were probably used in the curriculum of the Syrian and Levantine scribes. The Ugaritic scribes made a major contribution to the genre: the four-language vocabulary list, with columns for Sumerian, Akkadian, Hurrian, and Ugaritic words, all written in syllabic script (D. Pardee 1997c: 264-266).

[433] As was mentioned in the previous chapter (Chapter 2), lexical lists, the scribal genre of vocabulary lists and encyclopedic compendia, had close ties with the scribal study of languages in ancient Mesopotamia.

[434] Some Canaanite scribes may have been trained in the north according to the northern Syrian tradition of literacy. In his study of those Amarna Letters written by a scribe of Jerusalem, Moran (1975: 146-168) points out the features of these letters that indicate this scribe may have been trained in a northern, Syrian tradition. Upon completing his study of the paleography, punctuation, and Assyrianisms of the Jerusalem letters, Moran concludes that the language of these letters is characterized by a strong Assyrian influence. Although the peripheral Akkadian of the west likewise exhibits a number of Assyrianisms, the Jerusalem letters are unique in their incorporation of a high quantity of these linguistic features. At sites to the north such as Amurru, Alašiya, Ugarit, and Boğazköy, Moran finds examples of a comparably Assyrianizing language. Following Moran, A. Demsky (1990: 159) likewise proposes a northern background for the Jerusalem scribe, and goes further to suggest that this scribe came from Syria.

Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders posit the existence of a scribal school at Hazor during the MBII Age, which trained locals as scribes by foreign experts from Mari (or other sites). They indicate a mathematical prism (MBII) as "shar[ing] a feature with a parallel from Mari," as well as the two liver model fragments (MBII) and a school tablet, which dates later, to the LB Age.[435] The scribal education also included training in legal documents, as seen in a fragment of a lawsuit brought before the king of Hazor sometime between the eighteenth and sixteenth centuries BCE.[436] Even later, in the LB Age, when the direct contact of Hazor with Mari appears to have ended, the cuneiform fragments from various sites follow an academic tradition that hints at an ongoing contact with developments in the Mesopotamian scribal tradition. Excavations have uncovered fragments of lexical lists dating to the LB Age, one from Hazor and one from Ashkelon, both of which conform to the classical Mesopotamian tradition.[437] Found in the vicinity of Tel Megiddo, a small portion of the Gilgamesh epic, the most popular Akkadian literary work, furnishes evidence of a literary text used in scribal training.[438]

The character of these LB Age texts suggests a continued contact with developments in the Mesopotamian scribal tradition. In all likelihood, these developments were transmitted to the Canaanite scribes through intermediaries in the west rather than directly by Babylonian or Assyrian scribes. The most likely candidate for the source of this transmission is the scribal community of Ugarit; Sumerian-Akkadian lexical lists containing additional translations into West-Semitic (as well as Hittite and/or Hurrian) have been found there as well as at sites in Canaan.[439] The

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[435] Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 13.

[436] See Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 69-72. Cf. W.W. Hallo and H. Tadmor 1977: 1-11. Training in legal documents during the late MBII Age is likewise suggested by the discovery of the Birashenna letter at Shechem (Tel Balata), in which a Canaanite teacher issues a complaint that is based on a Mesopotamian legal precedent. See Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 121-123. Cf. F.M.Th. Böhl 1974: 21-30 (one of the directors of the 1926 German-Dutch excavations at Shechem which uncovered this letter).

[437] Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 18.

[438] A. Goetze and S. Levy 1959: 122-8.

[439] *Ibid.* Cf. D. Pardee 1997c: 264-266. At least three (possibly four) LB Age cuneiform texts found at sites in Canaan offer syllabically spelled Canaanite translations of logograms and of Akkadian words. The lexical list from Ashkelon features parts of a West-Semitic translation of the original Sumerian-Akkadian lexical series Urra = *hubullu*. The one from Hazor, which also is a fragment of a Urra = *hubullu* exerpt, may have also offered West Semitic equivalents (see also H. Tadmor 1977: 98-102). Two lists from Aphek contain double and triplicate entries. The bilingual text follows the well-known scribal pattern of writing in columns and consists of the Sumerian ideogram (along with a double *Glossenkeil* in the form of the syllabic GAM sign) in the first column, followed by the Akkadian equivalent in the second column. The trilingual cuneiform fragment reveals three columns, giving Sumerian, Akkadian, and Canaanite equivalents. For the

existence of small collections of texts (or "mini-archives") at Taanach[440] and Aphek suggests the possibility that archival techniques were also transmitted to Canaan from Ugarit.[441]

Despite the dominance of the Mesopotamian scribal tradition in Canaan, there are a few indications that the political encroachment of Egypt into the southern Levant over the course of the LB period was accompanied by an Egyptian influence on scribal practices.[442] Demsky has speculated that the Egyptian school of writing, which served the imperial bureaucracy at el-Amarna during the fourteenth century, may also have provided instruction for some of the Egyptian scribes serving in Canaan.[443] Although the formal Egyptian tradition of writing – monumental inscriptions in Egyptian hieroglyphs – made only the slightest of inroads into the Canaanite tradition of writing, several texts written in Egyptian hieratic have been found in LB Canaan. Some of these may have been produced by Egyptian scribes serving in the Egyptian administration of the land during the New Kingdom period (primarily during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties)[444] Others were very likely written by Canaanite scribes trained in Egyptian hieratic scribal practices. The hypothesis that some scribes in Canaan could write hieratic rather than or in addition to cuneiform is bolstered by the fact that at Ugarit in the north, many of the Ugaritic scribes were likewise trained in Egyptian writing practices and ably produced texts in Egyptian hieratic.[445]

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bilingual text from Aphek, see A.F. Rainey 1975: 125-9; for the trilingual text from Aphek, see Rainey 1976: 137-9.

[440] The seventeen texts found at Taanach comprise the most likely example of a LB Age archive in Canaan. These finds include nine letters or letter fragments, six administrative documents or fragments, a seal and an alphabetic cuneiform text. See Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 127-151. See also W.F. Albright (1944: 12-27) regarding the definition of these texts as an archive.

[441] Possible evidence for such contacts is found in a letter from the Governor of Ugarit to a subordinate at Aphek. See Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 35-38.

[442] For the earlier (Middle Bronze) role of Egyptian writing practices in the invention and early development of the Proto-Canaanite alphabet, see below.

[443] See Demsky 1990: 159. Demsky notes that Egyptian officials are mentioned in documents found at Tell el-Hesi, Megiddo, Taanach, and Aphek.

[444] Excavators at Tel Lachish, for example, have unearthed several sherds carrying short hieratic inscriptions and found in occupational debris dating to the LB Age. The writer of Sherd No. 1 from Tel Lachish identifies himself by the Egyptian title *sš* – "scribe." These sherds appear to point to the existence of an Egyptian administrative center located at Lachish (O. Goldwasser, 1991: 248-253).

[445] See Pardee 1997c: 264-266. The excavation inventories (*TEO* 418) make mention of approximately one hundred Egyptian inscriptions.

Despite the growing political involvement of Egypt in Canaan over the course of the LB Age, cuneiform writing continued to be the dominant form of writing used among the elites in Canaan. Although the Amarna letters were written by Canaanite vassals to their Egyptian overlords, their language and script attests to the continuation of the cuneiform writing tradition transmitted to Palestine from Mesopotamia. The Akkadian of the Amarna letters (and of the Taanach and Aphek letters), although dramatically different from that of the MB Age, nonetheless "remained firmly rooted in the language of the MB Age/OB period."[446] Moreover, the letters display conventions of correspondence that were ultimately derived from Mesopotamia and not from Egypt.[447] In their diplomatic correspondence with their vassals in Canaan, the Egyptians were forced to concede to the old and widespread non-Egyptian tradition of letter-writing and of writing in general in Syria and Canaan by likewise conducting their international correspondence in the Akkadian language and script.

Nevertheless, the writing system of the letters from Amarna as well as of the LB Age cuneiform tablets from Canaan exhibit "true independence from Mesopotamia", in that it reveals the incorporation of Canaanite features in the writing of the Canaanite scribes.[448] This development suggests that local scribes began to look for a means to locate their own culture within the dominant scribal tradition. For example, a mix of Mesopotamian and local scribal tradition characterizes the bilingual and trilingual lexical texts found at Aphek and dating to the LB Age.[449] Both of these lists, which offer West Semitic equivalents to selected Sumerian-Akkadian words, appear to be "indigenous Canaanite creations," especially as neither of them stem from a known lexical series.[450] Likewise witnessing to this combining of local and Mesopotamian scribal tradition are the Amarna letters, which include the presence of Canaanite *glossa* and West Semitic word order.[451]

Indeed, the Amarna letters offer a particularly intriguing window into the desire on the part of the Canaanite scribes to represent their own culture within the

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[446] Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 15.
[447] These conventions include Mesopotamian learned phraseology and epistolary patterning. Cf. S. Izre'el 1995: 2411-2419; A. Rainey 1996: Vol. I, Ch. 1: 8 and 15; E. von Dassow 2003: 196-217.
[448] Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 16; cf. p. 18. See also von Dassow 2004: 673.
[449] See note 439 above.
[450] von Dassow 2004: 670. Cf. Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 18.
[451] Rainey 1999: 63-87.

Mesopotamian tradition. The linguistic structure of these letters, particularly their "stagnation and reliance on older Akkadian layers,"[452] has encouraged many scholars to conclude that Canaanite scribes learned a mixed Canaano-Akkadian language rather than (or not only) contemporary Akkadian.[453] This language, according to Rainey in his recent publication on the Canaanite of the Amarna tablets, was "the special hybrid dialect, a sort of pidgin, or jargon, or more appropriately, the 'interlanguage'…used by the 'school' of scribes who belonged to the geographical (and socio-political) entity known as Canaan."[454]

While Rainey's view regarding the language of the Amarna letters from Canaan is certainly the most widely held, at least one scholar does not think this view goes far enough in explaining the strange features of the hybrid Canaanized Akkadian in which the Canaanite scribes wrote. According to E. von Dassow, the so-called "pidgin" dialect of these letters was not a language at all, but instead "essentially a code used for writing in cuneiform."[455] In von Dassow's opinion, the cuneiform of the Amarna letters was used as an "Akkadographic" code for writing Canaanite. She argues that the presence of numerous Canaanite glosses on logograms and syllabically spelled Akkadian words were

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[452] Izre'el 1995: 2418.

[453] According to Rainey (1996), the form of Akkadian learned by the Canaanite scribes was based on an Old Babylonian dialect that contained both archaic and late Old Babylonian features, as well as a number of Assyrianisms and possibly even some "Amurrite" features (see Vol. I, Ch. 1: 27; Ch. 2: *passim*; Ch. 3: 62-63; Ch. 4:81, 91; and Vol. II, Ch. 2). The cuneiform spelling practices (orthography) exhibited by the Canaanite Amarna letters likewise suggest that the Canaanite scribes were trained in a "conservative OB writing tradition" (I, Ch. 1:8; see also p. 15). See also the concurring opinions of Demsky 1990: 161-2; Moran 1967: 368-369 and 1972: 933-935; and W. Schniedewind 2004: 40. The Canaanite case may be compared to the peripheral Akkadian from the same general time and area (Ugarit, Alalakh, Emar), where the form of Akkadian language used at these sites was "peripheral" (cf. Pardee 1997c: 264-266 and van Soldt 1999: 28-45).

[454] Rainey 1996, II: 1. The odd hybrid Canaanized Akkadian of the Amarna tablets may be connected to the lack of direct contemporary contacts with Mesopotamia. In other words, the character of these letters from Canaan contrasts with the nature of the cuneiform material found in the rest of the sites possessing a written culture along Mesopotamia's western periphery (such as Ebla, Emar, Mari, Hattuša, and Ugarit). At these sites, the schools seem to have experienced direct contact with contemporary Mesopotamia and with other major centers of cuneiform learning, as testified by the "relatively continuous renewing of linguistic resources" (Izre'el 1995: 2418). By contrast, the emergence of an institutionalized diplomatic code like Canaano-Akkadian and its use for internal correspondence in Canaan proper as well as for international communication suggests "restricted contemporary contacts with the Mesopotamian core" (*Ibid*). This is hardly to be wondered at, since Canaan's subservient position to the Egyptian Empire of the Eighteenth Dynasty served to keep it almost completely isolated from the northern and eastern political and cultural powers with which it had been in contact before.

[455] von Dassow 2003: 196-217; quote found on p. 215. In her more recent essay on the subject, von Dassow (2004) refers to the hybrid of Canaanite and Akkadian in which the Canaanite scribes wrote as "an artifact of the scribes' use of cuneiform," and *not* as a language (p. 642).

intended for the *reader*, who was expected to understand the text in Canaanite. Von Dassow makes a distinction, however, between the text as it was encoded (i.e. written) and as it was read: the scribes reading the letter to pharaoh or his staff, or to another reader such as a Canaanite ruler, did not actually read what was written on the tablet: he "rendered what was read into the language appropriate for this audience."[456] Her hypothesis necessitates the assumption that there were Canaanite scribes at the Egyptian court at Amarna, or at the very least, scribes who had competence in understanding Canaanite glosses. The surprising implication of von Dassow's hypothesis is that "the true lingua franca shared by the Canaanite scribes and their correspondents in the Late Bronze Age was not Akkadian, as is usually assumed, but Canaanite."[457]

Intriguing as it is, von Dassow's proposal regarding the writing system of the Amarna letters will need to be substantiated by much more than two relatively short essays if it is to challenge successfully the prevailing consensus that the Canaanite-Akkadian hybrid of these texts is an autonomous dialect with its own linguistic system and its own rules of morphology and grammar.[458] A further difficulty for her hypothesis is her argument that the Egyptian scribes would bother employing Canaanite scribes or scribes who shared the same language of glossing as their counterparts in Canaan, a small, relatively unimportant swathe of territory. Von Dassow's hypothesis need not be rejected entirely, however; although it stretches belief that the Egyptians would have bothered communicating in Canaanite rather than the international *lingua franca*, von Dassow's study does effectively support the following proposition: that the Canaano-Akkadian used in the Amarna Letters, rather than being seen as evidence of isolation from Mesopotamian scribal centers, instead may be indicative of local elitist attempts to inject local ethnic identity into language as symbol.[459] Regardless of the exact identity of

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[456] von Dassow 2004: 647-648.

[457] *Ibid*, 216.

[458] A particular challenge for von Dassow is the fact that this case for viewing the writing system of the Amarna letters as a Canaanite-Akkadian hybrid has been set out so exhaustively by Rainey in his four-volume work on Canaanite in the Amarna tablets.

[459] As von Dassow (2004) expresses it, the scribes of Canaan were no longer "entirely in the thrall of the Mesopotamian scribal tradition" (p. 674). A similar process of representing a local tongue and culture in the Akkadian writing system appears to have taken place at Ugarit. In an essay studying the syllabic Akkadian texts from Ugarit, van Soldt (1999: 28-45) observes that "the native language of the scribes at Ugarit interfered more and more with their Akkadian," and that this development "provides a good parallel for developments in other cities outside Mesopotamia where Akkadian was written" (pg. 45).

the language used in these letters, they clearly provide a witness both to the efforts of the local Canaanite scribes "to adapt their mother tongue to familiar scribal methods and traditions,"[460] as well as to their desire to represent their own tongue and culture through the written medium of communication.

Alphabetic Cuneiform Writing Technology

The effort to invest language as a symbol with a local identity appears to have its parallel in the production of the late second millennium's alphabetic cuneiform script, as well as in the first millennium linear alphabetic scripts of Canaan (more on the latter in the subsequent section). The appearance of texts in alphabetic cuneiform writing, the subject of this section, reflected the emergence of an independent scribal tradition primarily at Ugarit in the northern Levant. The use of this script was not exclusive to this site, however, as attested by the recovery of alphabetic cuneiform texts from scattered sites in the northern and southern Levantine region.[461] Although it is beyond the scope of the limited data to say that alphabetic cuneiform was used broadly among scribes throughout Canaan for local administrative and literary needs,[462] it is evident that a number of scribes capable of writing and reading this script were active in areas outside of Ugarit and as far southwards as Beth Shemesh near Jerusalem.

It is typically assumed that the presence of cuneiform alphabetic texts in Canaan was simply expressive of Ugarit's influence there; however, the cuneiform alphabet was by no means the earliest alphabetic writing extant in the Levant, and there is evidence

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[460] Demsky 1990: 162. The final outcome of this process of adapting their own language to the dominant cuneiform tradition was the use of cuneiform script for Canaanite, as revealed in the letters from the court of the rebel King Labaya of Shechem: in a letter to the Egyptian king, King Labaya's scribes wrote down a Canaanite proverb – the parable of the ant (EA 252).

[461] The sites around Syria, Lebanon, and Israel that have yielded tablets or inscribed objects with alphabetic cuneiform inscriptions include Minet el-Beida (Ugarit's harbor town), Tel Sukas, and Tel Nebi Mend in Syria; Kamid el-Loz and Sarepta in Lebanon; and Tel Taanach, Mount Tabor, and Beth Shemesh in Israel (see W. Pitard 1999: 28-57 and, more recently, Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 157-166; see also B. Peckham 2001: 24-25 for the inscriptions found at Sarepta and Kamid el-Loz). The exemplar from Tel Taanach can be dated quite specifically to the Iron I period: the tablet (identified as a receipt for a grain shipment) was found in the twelfth century stratum of a destroyed large building (A. Glock 1993: 1428-1433). Most of the other examples of alphabetic cuneiform found outside Ugarit and Ras Ibn Hani come from unclear contexts.

[462] Because of the small number of tablets written in alphabetic cuneiform that have been discovered at a few sites in Palestine, a number of scholars believe that alphabetic cuneiform was used quite widely in Syria-Palestine during the late second millennium BCE. Cf. Demsky 1988: 7; Schniedewind 2004: 40; and Whitt 1995: 2379-2397.

that Ugaritic was influenced by alphabetic writing systems from southwestern Canaan, rather than vice versa. According to this hypothesis, Ugaritic represents the fusion of two earlier alphabetic traditions: the *'-b-g* sequence of the north-west tradition, and the *h-l-h-m* sequence that is distinctive of the South Arabic alphabet of the south-east.[463] In other words, a Levantine tradition with twenty-two letters was "overlaid by an Arabic tradition so that, with some additions, a thirty-letter alphabet was derived."[464]

How did this process happen? M. Dietrich and O. Loretz believe it has a lot to do with the migration of people from south-eastern Canaan to the northern Levant,[465] and their development of a commercial ruling dynasty at Ugarit. Upon their arrival, they were able to insert their native language "into an existing scribal school and writing tradition and thus the alphabet already discovered could be expanded."[466] This ruling house found it expedient to adopt the cuneiform tradition and accompanying Middle Babylonian *koine* current at the time, particularly in the face of the Hittite dominance and the importance of this *koine* in the Syrian and Levantine region. By not incorporating the cuneiform tradition or employing the clay tablet technology until the fourteenth century, Ugarit submitted to the dictates of the Hittite rulers and their Syrian center in Carchemish quite a bit later than did its eastern neighbors.[467]

At Ugarit, the uses found for writing largely followed the pattern established earlier in Mesopotamia: as at many Mesopotamian sites, at Ugarit the technology of

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[463] Support for this hypothesis has come in the form of two discoveries: the first was a small clay tablet unearthed at Beth Shemesh in southern Palestine and dated to the fourteenth/thirteenth century BCE. On this tablet was inscribed "not only the beginning of the South Arabian alphabet (*h-l-h-m*) but the complete alphabet written from left to right round the tablet." This tradition therefore dates back to at least the fourteenth/thirteenth centuries. The second discovery was a "palimpsest" tablet dug up in south-east Ugarit in the archive of a scribe named Urtenu. This tablet was inscribed with the South Arabian alphabet of the *h-l-h-m* tradition. The discovery of these two tablets suggests a connection between the Ugaritic Long Alphabet and the South Arabian alphabet (Dietrich and Loretz 1999: 81-89, especially p. 85; followed by J. Vita 1999: 455-498, especially p. 456).

[464] Dietrich and Loretz 1999: 89.

[465] Suggestive in this regard is the discovery at Kamid el-Loz (Kumidi) of a few letters and monograms written in South Arabic script and dating to the LB Age; this site beyond the Lebanon in the Biqaʿ also produced two inscriptions in cuneiform alphabetic script (in the short 22-letter alphabet) on a jar handle and on the edge of a bowl (Peckham 2001: 25).

[466] *Ibid*. This process was evidently quite rapid. As Sass (1988: 143) observes, the invention of the Ugaritic alphabet in the fourteenth century was very much an official act, as the script came to be used for all kinds of texts within a short space of time.

[467] Dietrich 1996: 33-47. Even the Ugaritic alphabet was designed to be adapted from its linear form to a cuneiform method of writing in order to be more easily written on clay tablets. Before that, the scribes at Ugarit likely wrote with a brush or pen on a smooth surface (such as that provided by bark or papyrus) (*Ibid*; cf. A. Curtis 1999: 5-27).

writing facilitated the complex system of land donations, receipts for economic transactions, deeds of ownership and judgments, sequences of offerings and order of rituals, etc. that played such an important role in the royal administration, and by extension, in the world of the elite classes of Ugarit. Conversely, the fact that scribes at Ugarit used the Ugaritic language to write down their local myths, epics, and cultic religious works suggests that there was a strong sense of ethnic identity bound up in the use of Ugaritic. This is particularly true in light of "Ugarit's late opening up to cuneiform culture" and of the fact that before the fourteenth century, Ugarit "belonged to the world of alphabetic learning in the Levant."[468]

Indeed, the Syrian Babylonian tradition does not appear to have had any direct influence over this independent literary tradition at Ugarit, particularly since the Syrian Babylonian Akkadian texts do not seem to have had a tradition within Ugarit. Reflecting "a schoolish Akkadian of superior literature in the Syrian koine imported into Ugarit,"[469] the Syrian Babylonian literary texts were imported from Boğazköy and Emar[470] and were used primarily as learning material for those learning cuneiform.

As far as we presently know, alphabetic cuneiform did not outlast the collapse of Ugarit and "its busy world of messengers and scribes."[471] With the dissolution of the religious and bureaucratic activity at Ugarit, the Levantine region lost its primary center of scribal activity and learning based upon the traditions of the Babylonian education system. The connection between the fall of Ugarit and the disappearance of its alphabetic cuneiform script at both that site and particularly at sites in the southern Levant is unclear. Some of this development doubtless can be attributed to the period of disruption beginning ca. 1200 BCE, during which attestations of writing in any script are scarce. Once the center for the reading and writing of the cuneiform alphabet was gone with the destruction of Ugarit, the "number of scribes left to use it [in other Canaanite cities] and the demands for it were too weak to sustain it."[472]

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[468] Dietrich 1996: 45.
[469] *Ibid*, 40.
[470] In an essay on the Hurrian and Hittite texts found at Ugarit, Dietrich and Mayer (1999: 58-75) note that "comparisons between the Akkadian literary texts from Emar and Ugarit" reveal the existence of "close scholarly ties between both places which found an expression in their common tradition" (pg. 63).
[471] Millard 1995: 122.
[472] *Ibid*, 123.

Ultimately, the fate of the script developed at Ugarit may have been determined by three primary factors: (1) the fact that Ugarit never reached a hegemonic imperial status further to the south; (2) the resulting failure of the Ugaritic scribes to create a sense of national identification among the southern Levantine sites that was linked to the use of the cuneiform script; and (3) the existence of an earlier, linear, north-west alphabetic tradition that was better suited to the limited uses found for writing during the Iron I period. In other words, the Canaanite linear alphabet persisted instead of the cuneiform alphabet after Ugarit's destruction because it was easier to use and because the Canaanites of the southern Levant do not appear to have invested any sense of national identity in the use of cuneiform writing.

Linear Alphabetic Writing Technology

As has been detailed in the previous section, the evidence from Ugarit suggests that the West Semitic alphabetic tradition was likely the original scribal tradition of the Levant. Unfortunately, a mere three or four objects bearing an early, pictographic version of the script (proto-Canaanite)[473] and dating to a period before the invention of the Ugaritic script (i.e. the late Middle Bronze and early Late Bronze Ages) have been discovered in Canaan.[474] On the other hand, if the two proto-Canaanite inscriptions (also in pictographic characters) from Wadi el-Hol in the Theban Western Desert represent some of the earliest known attestations of the West Semitic script, then these texts may constitute proof that the West Semitic alphabetic tradition (if not its linear script) existed already ca. 1850-1700 BCE.[475] The thirty-one Proto-Canaanite Sinaitic inscriptions found at the ancient Egyptian turquoise-mining site known as Serabit el-Khadem in west-

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[473] See note 354 above for the distinction made by G. Hamilton between "Proto-Canaanite" and "Old Canaanite," and followed in this study.

[474] Of these early Proto-Canaanite inscriptions, only one (the MB Lachish dagger) was found in a secure archaeological context – an eighteenth or seventeenth century tomb. The Nagila sherd was discovered in a residential quarter (Area A) of Tel Nagila and probably dates from the end of the MB or the beginning of the LB Age (sixteenth century). The Gezer sherd, found in the dumps of Macalister's excavations) at Tel Gezer, likely dates to the fifteenth-fourteenth centuries. The fourth inscription, a fragment of a limestone relief with an incised inscription, was found in an unclear stratigraphic context at Shechem but has been tentatively dated by B. Sass (based on palaeography) to the fourteenth century (for these inscriptions, see Sass 1988: 53-58). Hamilton (2006), however, argues for an earlier range of dates (either ca. 1650-1550 or 1450-1400 BCE) for this inscription (p. 308). Two additional inscriptions identified by Hamilton as Proto-Canaanite are the Grossman Seal (ca. 1400 BCE, ± 100 years) and the inscription on a carinated bowl from Tel el-Hesi (ca. 1350 ± 50 years) (pp. 309-310).

[475] Hamilton 2006: 295-296.

central Sinai provide further confirmation of this view; the earliest of these inscriptions may have a similar range of dates as those from Wadi el-Hol (ca. 1850-1700 BCE).[476]

G. Hamilton has recently argued that the invention of the alphabet took place early in the Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 1940-1850 BCE) during the Middle Kingdom period (MB Age), and that its invention arose out of the Egyptian practice of graffiti writing on rocks and personal stelae. His basis for this hypothesis is the paleographic similarities of the early alphabetic script with the graphic forms of Egyptian hieroglyphs and hieratic script of the Twelfth Dynasty, as well as the parallel context in which the earliest Proto-Canaanite inscriptions are found (like thousands of Egyptian inscriptions of this period, inscribed by individuals on rock faces and stelae).[477]

Regardless of when and where the West Semitic linear alphabetic script was invented, what is clear is that this alphabetic tradition emerged well before the transitional period of collapse and crisis in the Mediterranean region (ca. 1300-1100 BCE), and it was the sole tradition to survive the LB/Iron I transition. This alphabetic writing system, whose script had gained a linear character by ca. 1400 BCE, was the common ancestor for all of the script traditions later employed by the Iron II polities of the southern Levantine region (and beyond). It was this Canaanite linear alphabet, rather than Mesopotamian syllabary or alphabetic cuneiform, which came to be identified with a sense of statehood or nationhood in the southern Levant.

The south of Canaan provided the context for the first attested use of the alphabet in the country: the pictographic Proto-Canaanite inscriptions from the late MB—early LB period come from sites in the south (Lachish, Tel Nagila, and Gezer); although the next group of ten texts comes from a wider area following a gap of 200-300 years, most still come from the south. The only texts to originate in the north are those in Old Canaanite alphabetic script from Zarephath, Hazor, and Tel Rehov. In his 1988 monograph on early alphabetic inscriptions, B. Sass suggests that during the thirteenth and twelfth centuries,

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[476] *Ibid*, 300. Sass (1988) proposes a date within this range as well (ca. 1800 BCE) (pp. 135-156). Before the discovery of the Wadi el-Hol inscriptions, it was thought that the inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadem alone represented the earliest attestations of the West Semitic alphabet script (see Sass: 135-156 and Pardee 1997b: 354-355).
[477] *Ibid*, 291-292.

the south preferred the Old Canaanite alphabet, whereas the north preferred the short cuneiform alphabet.[478]

The character of the early Proto-Canaanite and later Old Canaanite inscriptions is startlingly different from those produced by the sophisticated scribal institutions at Ugarit and elsewhere in Syria. Indeed, the different uses to which writing was put following the appearance of the Canaanite linear alphabet in the LB and Iron I Ages represents one of the most curious developments in the history of Levantine script technology, particularly in light of the dominance of the Mesopotamian writing system and conventions in Bronze Age Syria and Canaan. Rather than turning up on caches of tablets as did the Akkadian and alphabetic cuneiform scripts, the earliest examples of the Canaanite linear alphabet are found on scattered ostraca and vessels at sites throughout Canaan. Moreover, the Proto-Canaanite and the later Old Canaanite inscriptions tend to be quite brief and prosaic, although it is conceivable that longer texts were written on perishable materials.[479] By contrast, in Mesopotamia and Syria during the Bronze Age, there are very few attestations of graffiti, casual notes, or names added to pottery vessels after baking. For the most part, therefore, the earliest uses found for writing in the Canaanite linear alphabet appear to represent a distinct departure from the scribal and text-based uses, as exemplified by the texts rendered in Akkadian and Ugaritic that are found throughout Syria and Canaan.

The appearance of graffiti on pottery sherds and other objects is not entirely without precedent at Middle and Late Bronze Age sites around the eastern Mediterranean, however. It has already been seen in the previous chapter that the use of writing for so-called "casual" inscriptions (graffiti) was a distinctive feature of Egyptian elite literate activity, particularly during the Middle Kingdom (ca. 1980-1630 BCE) and New Kingdom periods (ca. 1539-1075 BCE). Furthermore, Hamilton (as mentioned above), has convincingly made the case for viewing this practice of writing graffiti as the catalyst for the invention of the West Semitic alphabet in the Middle Kingdom, ca. 1940-1850 BCE (with the first attestations at Wadi el-Hol and Serabit el-Khadem dated to

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[478] Sass 1988: 157-168. Upon observing that the short cuneiform alphabet may have been more popular in the north, Sass notes that ten of the twelve inscriptions in the short cuneiform script originate in the north (Ugarit, Taanach, Nahal Tavor).
[479] Some of the earliest Proto-Canaanite inscriptions, those in the western Sinai, establish something of a precedent for the composition of lengthy inscriptions in this alphabetic writing system.

between 1850 and 1700 BCE). It is not unlikely that over the four-hundred year period later in the LB Age, during which Egypt maintained a physical presence in Canaan, the Canaanite scribes continued to be exposed to this graffiti habit by Egyptian scribes and officials. Such an event is suggested by the short hieratic inscriptions on votive bowls and small ostraca uncovered at Tel Lachish in occupational debris dated to the LB Age.[480]

As was emphasized in the section on literacy in Egypt, ancient Egyptian graffiti may have been "unofficial," but they were far from casual or incidental: its practitioners typically were elite, and its use frequently belonged to the military and to the cultic and/or priestly sphere. In this regard, some of the earliest Proto-Canaanite inscriptions from Egypt appear to be the production of an elitist (and in this case, military) undertaking. The two Wadi el-Hol inscriptions were inscribed on a prominent location on the better part of the wadi's inscriptional wall, alongside Egyptian graffiti dated to the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate period (ca. 1630-1539 BCE). One of these two inscriptions was apparently written by the chief or captain of a military expedition, as his title as such is recorded next to the man's Egyptian name (translated into Semitic characters), followed by his Semitic name.[481] One of the earliest Proto-Canaanite inscriptions from Palestine, the Lachish Dagger (ca. 1725 BCE), also appears to be the product of an elite sphere. It belongs to a category of prestige artifacts that is represented in the southern Levant by the alphabetic cuneiform inscriptions on a knife blade from Tabor (thirteenth or twelfth centuries BCE) and on an axe-head shaped tablet from Beth Shemesh (twelfth century BCE),[482] as well as by the inscribed linear alphabetic arrowheads dating to the Early Iron Age (see below, pp. 152-154).[483]

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[480] For the hieratic inscriptions from Lachish, see Goldwasser 1991: 248-253. These hieratic signs and numerals continued to be employed in the southern Levant down through the late Iron II period (cf. Goldwasser 1991: 248-253 and Na'aman 1996a: 172-3, who comment specifically on this tradition of using hieratic script in southern Canaan).

[481] See W. Shea 2004: 45-60. Possibly connected to this graffito is the so-called Bebi inscription, which locates the general of a West Semitic speaking military group and their families directly at Wadi el-Hol late in the Middle Kingdom (see Hamilton 2006: 295).

[482] For the most recent publication of these two alphabetic cuneiform inscriptions, see Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 157-160 (Beth Shemesh abecedary) 163-166 (Tabor inscription).

[483] The fact that the Lachish Dagger was deposited in a tomb along with other items such as scarabs and pottery likewise points to its elite context.

The same elite character appears to be shared by examples of LB graffiti coming from Ugarit, a site that is geographically closer to Canaan and chronologically contemporary with many of the Old Canaanite inscriptions.[484] A number of axe heads from Ugarit were inscribed *rb khnm* ("chief of priests") and have been interpreted as votive in function and priestly in authorship. This discovery helps establish something of a precedent for the use of graffiti writing in the Levant, one that suggests that its use was often far from casual and took place in the elite sphere. This votive use may be compared with the Lachish Ewer inscription (thirteenth century BCE) from the site of Tel Lachish in southern Canaan. This inscription, representing according to D. Pardee "the clearest example of a meaningful Canaanite text," appears on a large decorated urn that was found in the Fosse Temple. Pardee interprets the inscription (*mtn.šy [xxx]ty 'lt*) as reading "a gift of tribute [for the La]dy, the goddess of […]" or "(From) Mattan: a tribute [a La]dy 'Ilat[…]."[485]

The find-spots for many of the earliest Old Canaanite inscriptions (those possessing a more linear form of the Proto-Canaanite pictographic script, and dated from ca. 1400 onwards) discovered to date in southern Canaan reveal that while initial efforts to exploit the script may have been experimental, many if not most of its users may have already been conversant with other scripts (i.e. Akkadian and/or cuneiform alphabetic). In other words, the LB contexts for many of the Old Canaanite inscriptions suggests that this new scribal tradition was fostered within the same scribal context as that which produced the Amarna correspondence of the fourteenth century BCE. Indeed, the Old Canaanite script is attested in fourteenth and thirteenth century contexts at sites that were primary power brokers (and Amarna correspondents) in fourteenth century Canaan. At least six of the sites that took an active part in the correspondence between Canaan and El-Amarna in Egypt have produced inscriptions dating to these two centuries and written in Proto-Canaanite alphabetic characters: Beth Shemesh, Gezer, Hazor, Lachish,

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[484] The Old Canaanite inscriptions date roughly to a period between 1400 and 1050 BCE; with the exception of some of the Egyptian inscriptions and one in Phoenician, the inscriptions from Ugarit date to the last two centuries of primary occupation at the site (ca. 1400-1186 BCE) (see Pardee 1997c: 264).
[485] Pardee 1997a: 352. Most of the ewer fragments were found in an ancient rubbish dump or pit outside the eastern wall of the temple; one sherd was found inside the temple, on the Phase III floor (Sass 1988: 60-61).

Megiddo, and Shechem.[486] It would appear that the limited scribal tradition that had emerged at these sites during the Bronze Age persisted through the disruptions of the LB/Iron I transition to help foster the new, local script and fledgling scribal tradition centered on the Canaanite linear alphabet.

The inscriptions that are more difficult to account for are those discovered at several small sites in the highlands of Canaan which have produced little or no evidence for previous writing activity. This enigma is heightened by the fact that the purpose for these inscriptions, as for many of the fourteenth and thirteenth century inscriptions found at the six sites above, is elusive: they are short and fragmentary, and only a few have an intelligible meaning.[487] All of these inscriptions tend to be dated to the beginning of the Iron I period (twelfth century BCE) based (at least in part) on theories regarding the settlement of a new population in the highlands during that period (traditionally understood to be the "Israelites" or "proto-Israelites," their immediate ancestral predecessors).

Two of the primary inscriptions discovered in the hill country, however, could be dated to other periods. The Raddanah handle, given an upper limit of 1200 BCE by Cross and Freedman (on the basis of the traditional dating of the Israelite settlement to

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[486] The dating for most of these inscriptions is based on their palaeography, as the archaeological context in which they were discovered does not permit certain dating. The Beth Shemesh ostracon, a fragment of a storage jar with black ink inscriptions on both sides, was discovered in a residential area, between Strata V and IV (but the stratigraphy is not reliable) (Sass 1988: 64-65). A body sherd of a closed vessel with an inscription incised before firing, the Gezer sherd may date to the fifteenth-fourteenth centuries BCE; unfortunately, a lack of archaeological context for the Gezer sherd makes this date uncertain (Sass 1988: 55-56). The Hazor sherd, with two letters painted before firing, was found on the surface in Area D2 (Sass 1988: 71-72). The Lachish Ewer and Sherd No. 7 can be dated more reliably to the thirteenth century: one of the sherds from the ewer was found on the Phase III (thirteenth century) floor of the temple, while the rest of the ewer was discovered in an ancient rubbish dump outside the eastern wall of the temple; Sherd No. 7 was discovered in the fill of the palace-fort, which contained sherds mainly from the thirteenth century (Sass 1988: 60-62). Another inscription that can be dated with good certainty to a period between 1250 and 1150 BCE (based on the inscription's palaeography and the pottery found together with it) is that found on a ring made of gold (M 2992) that was discovered in the tomb 912 B, to the south-east of Megiddo. In place of a stone, the widest part of the ring bears a short inscription containing the name of its owner along with his patronymic: "Adon" son of "Shema" (E. Puech 1999: 51-61). The Shechem Plaque, a fragment of a limestone relief with an incised inscription and incisions on the reverse, was found in an unclear stratigraphic context, but has been dated by Sass to the fourteenth century (1988: 56-58, 158).
[487] Along with the two inscriptions mentioned in the body of the paragraph, a third cryptic inscription has been found at the tiny village of Khirbet Tannin in the Tel el-Farah (N) system. It consists of a 58-by-61-by-9-millimeter potsherd inscribed either ŠMN ("oil"?) or nimiš, "wasp" (if read left-to-right) (A. Lemaire 1985: 14).

the twelfth century),[488] strategraphically comes from the earlier Phase 3 (thirteenth century) at Khirbet Raddanah.[489] The Izbet Sartah inscription has long been dated to the twelfth century, but given its epigraphy and the unclear stratigraphical attribution of the silo in which it was discovered, the inscription could easily be dated to a later time in the Iron I period.[490] This latter inscription is particularly cryptic, consisting as it does of an abecedary and four lines that have long been undeciphered, inscribed on a wheeled storage jar. The consensus holds that the eighty crudely inscribed letters of the inscriptions are written in proto-Phoenician or some sort of "Philistine" Greco-Canaanite,[491] and that the abecedary together with the rather random agglomeration of letters in the first four lines of the inscription constitute a writing exercise of some kind.[492]

One of the more obscure uses found for writing is the chiseling of personal names on the mid-ribs of around thirty arrow or javelin heads dating possibly as early as the late twelfth but primarily to the eleventh centuries.[493] Only one of these inscribed arrowheads was found during a controlled excavation of a disturbed burial cave at Ruweiseh in the Biq'a of Lebanon. Four of the five *'bdlb't* arrowheads were supposedly found in a field

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[488] Cross and Freedman 1971: 22.

[489] Sass (1988) assigns the Raddanah handle an upper limit of 1300 BCE (pp. 58-60). This handle fragment was found in the Site R room at Kh. Raddanah and bears the letters *'hl* or *'hr* (incised after firing). The inscription could be read as the diminutive of the personal name such as "Ahilud" or "Ahilah" or "Ahlay." The problem with dating the handle to the thirteenth century lies in the fact that there is no thirteenth century occupation at Kh. Raddanah (Miller 2005: 104-111). Also from Phase 3 is a bronze dagger with writing on it, but never deciphered.

[490] See, for example, Lemaire (2000: 243-249), who dates the Izbet Sartah ostracon to the late eleventh century and attributes it to an Israelite scribal apprentice in contact with the Canaano-Philistine scribal tradition from Aphek.

[491] While suggesting that the ostracon may be written in "Philistine" Greco-Canaanite, J. Naveh (1985) does remind his readers that the absence of linguistic or orthographic features makes it impossible to specify with confidence the language of the script (pp. 31-35).

[492] Cf. Cross 1981: 8-15; G. Davies 2002: 273; Demsky 1988: 1-20; Hess 2002: 82-102; Naveh 1978: 31-35; Peckham 2001: 22; and Sass 1988: 66.

[493] The typological range of the uninscribed el-Khadr arrowheads can only suggest a general date for these inscribed arrowheads to the end of the second millennium. As none of these arrowheads can be dated based on the context of their discovery (since almost all were discovered on the antiquities market), their dating to the late twelfth and eleventh centuries is based largely on their paleography. Because the Old Canaanite script and the direction of the letters came to be stabilized by the end of the eleventh century BCE, and because many of the inscriptions on these arrowheads betray an uncertainty regarding the orientation of the letters, most scholars therefore date these arrowheads a bit earlier, to the early-to-mid eleventh century.

at 'el-Khadr, five kilometers west of Bethlehem and close to the Iron I site of Giloh.[494] Although the rest have no known provenance, almost all of the arrowheads are believed to have originated in the southern part of Lebanon (ancient "Phoenicia").[495]

There is little agreement among experts as to the purpose of these inscribed projectiles. Some scholars speculate that the names were marked on these projectiles with the intent of proving ownership when the arrow had hit the target.[496] Conversely, the arrowheads may have served as votive gifts; this use would have parallels with the five LB Age axe-heads from Ugarit that were engraved in alphabetic cuneiform with the words *rb khnm* ("chief of priests")[497] and with the mid-eleventh century arrowheads inscribed in Akkadian cuneiform from the Iranian Luristan region.[498] A few scholars attribute the phenomenon of these arrowheads to belomancy.[499]

Thus far, the inscribed arrowheads, along with a few other inscriptions (the Lachish Ewer Inscription and the Megiddo ring), supply the only tangible information about the possible identity of the users of linear alphabetic writing during the Late Bronze and early Iron periods. These inscriptions attest to the use of writing by the elite of the early Iron Age society of Canaan. As mentioned previously (p. 149), the inscribed arrowheads belong to a category of prestige artifacts with alphabetic writing that are attested earlier in the MB and LB Ages. Among the owners of the arrowheads, one is clearly a king: Zakarba'al, King of Amurru. Additional inscribed arrowheads mention several other high-ranking people (*rb*, *rb 'lf*), as well as warriors (*'š*, "man [of]") who

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[494] The fifth *'bdlb't* arrowhead was purchased in 'Amman from a Jordanian dealer (R. Deutsch and M. Heltzer 1995: 28).

[495] Cf. Cross 1993: 533-542; Deutsch and Heltzer 1995: 28-30; Puech 2000: 251-269; and Sass 1988: 79-88. With the exception of the Ruweiseh arrowhead, all of these inscribed projectiles "reached their present locations in public or private collections via the antiquities markets of the Middle East and Europe" (Deutsch and Heltzer 1995: 28).

[496] See Deutsch and Heltzer 1995: 36. It would be difficult to attribute this function to at least one of the arrow points, that belonging to the collection of the National Museum of Beirut, because this arrowhead features not one but three names (!). In her analysis of this arrowhead, H. Sader (2000) speculates that it was used by three successive individuals over the course of around 50 years during the eleventh century BCE (pp. 271-279).

[497] See Millard 1995: 123.

[498] See Sass 1988: 72-75.

[499] This thesis was first raised by S. Iwry (1961: 27-32), and it has been more recently taken up by Puech (2000: 251-269), who has posited that the inscribed arrowheads were used in divination – in the conjuring away of enemy powers, i.e. as a sort of totem securing success in battle. He does argue, however, against the necessity of choosing between a divinatory or belomantic usage and a strictly military usage.

were in the service of leaders with the rank of *rb 'lf* ("commander of a thousand"), and perhaps under the command of "the King of Amurru."[500]

Based upon the names found on the arrowheads, a largely Phoenician and West Semitic origin for the owners may be presumed. A Phoenician background for the arrowheads is substantiated by the fact that when the place of origin is given, in every case it is in Canaanite-Phoenician territory.[501] The geographic area that is covered in the place of origin references comprises Sidon in the north to 'Akko in the south (including *'bdn* and Tyre). Like many of the arrowheads, the other two objects mentioned above – the Lachish Ewer and the Megiddo ring – are witnesses to the elite use of writing in Iron I Canaan. Both of the objects on which inscriptions appear (a large decorated urn and a golden ring) are luxury goods, and both were found in elite contexts (a temple and a tomb also containing fine pottery and objects in bronze, copper, gold, silver, iron, and stone).[502]

Apart from the inscriptions referenced above, however, for many of the earliest attestations of the Canaanite linear alphabet, the social milieu behind this kind of literacy is more difficult to identify. Nonetheless, a few preliminary observations may be made. The fact that many of these inscriptions occur at sites which clearly possessed some kind of scribal activity during the Late Bronze Age suggests that scribes may often have been behind the rendering of this new script as well. Moreover, on the basis of the Egyptian analogies and the more clearly elite context of the Iron I inscriptions discussed above, it can be argued that these graffiti were produced as part of an elitist, priestly, and/or military undertaking. Although most if not all Iron I inscriptions may derive from elite contexts, the appearance as well as the brevity of these inscriptions emphasizes the piecemeal and often unintelligible use of writing in the early stages of the Canaanite linear alphabet. Their content suggests experimentation with a new script, as well as the attribution of symbolic, perhaps even magical characteristics to letters and words.

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[500] See Deutsch and Heltzer 1995: 28-9.

[501] *Ibid*, 30. The place of origin is given for about ten percent of the persons. For the personal names of the owners, see pp. 31-35. In regard to the identity of the "king of Amurru", his name (transliterated here as Zakarbaal) is Phoenician. Moreover, although Amurru on the Syrian coast was not a Phoenician city *per se*, it had by the early Iron Age become a Phoenician protectorate (see Peckham 2001: 22-24).

[502] The tomb had apparently seen a very long period of use: the ceramic material in the tomb dates primarily to the Middle Bronze and Late Bronze periods, but several of the vessels provide a *terminus ad quem* for the tomb's use (1250-1150 BCE) (see Puech 1999: 58-60).

The Iron I Trading Centers of the Lebanese Coast and the Emergent Writing Tradition of the Southern Levant

At least one of the first regions in Canaan to make extensive use of the West Semitic language and to develop the cursive linear (as opposed to semi-pictographic) version of the script was the area along the southern Levantine coast, from Byblos in the north to 'Akko in the south. The eleventh century arrowheads from this region represent only the tip of the iceberg; inscriptions in the linear alphabetic script began to proliferate in the tenth and ninth centuries in the coastal trading center of Byblos on the Lebanese coast, and these dates in the late Iron I period suggest that the people of this coastal city were the first to begin exploiting the potential of the linear alphabet as a writing technology.[503]

In Byblos,[504] therefore, the use of writing for continuous texts in the West Semitic alphabet appears to have begun 100-150 years earlier than anywhere else in the Levant.[505]

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[503] Phoenician developed through several phases and into several dialects, but the two primary dialects of Lebanese Phoenician that are epigraphically attested are Byblian (spanning the period 1000 to 400 BCE), the language of the city of Byblos, and Tyro-Sidonian (or *Ponnīm*), which came to be used as a "common standard language" by all Phoenicians (C. Krahmalkov 2002: 207). The fact that royal inscriptions written in the Tyro-Sidonian dialect of Phoenician begin to crop up in the Aramean kingdoms of northern Syria by the late ninth century suggests that by this period (or a bit earlier) royal and formal inscriptions in this dialect were being rendered in other major coastal cities besides Byblos during the Iron I period. Unfortunately, the poor preservation of these sites made their survival improbable.

[504] Another writing tradition existed at Byblos: pseudo-hieroglyphic. The earliest artifacts with writing from Byblos are in this enigmatic pseudo-hieroglyphic script and date to the Middle Bronze Age. The Ahiram sarcophagus (*KAI* no. 1), for example, was probably made in the thirteenth century and inscribed with a pseudo-hieroglyphic inscription; the later ca. 1000 BCE inscription in Phoenician began after and, for the most part, avoided the earlier one. The tenth century dedicatory inscription attributed to Yehimilk (*KAI* no. 4) on a broken stone slab is actually a palimpsest written over an earlier pseudo-hieroglyphic inscription (Vance 1994: 6-8). The pseudo-hieroglyphic script may have lingered through Iron I until ca. 900 BCE (or even the mid-ninth century BCE, as argued by Sass 2005: 54).

[505] The traditional dating of the Byblian ensemble to the tenth century BCE is maintained in this analysis, despite the challenge mounted by Sass in his recent (2005) monograph. Sass proposes downdating the four Byblian inscriptions (those of Elibaal, Yahimilk, Ahiram, and Abibaal) to the early or even late ninth century BCE, and suggests a concurrence in the early ninth century of the late Proto-Canaanite and early Phoenician scripts. The basis upon which he attempts to shake the traditional tenth century dating of the Byblos inscriptions is rather problematic, however. The primary pillars on which his case rests are far from compelling: (1) the reliefs (not the palaeography!) of the Ahiram sarcophagus, which he dates to the ninth century; (2) the inscription on a bowl from Kefar Veradim in the Upper Galilee region (17 km northeast of Acre), which Sass identifies as early Phoenician but downdates to ca. 900 BCE – primarily on the basis of *only* two letters on a sherd from Rosh Zayit with a Phoenician ink inscription that comes from an early Iron II context contemporary with Kefar Veradim (in his dating of the bowl's inscription, Sass is in disagreement with the excavator, Y. Alexandre 2002: 65*-74*, who gave the inscription a date of ca. 950 BCE); (3) and the archaizing, late Old Canaanite letters on the Tell Fekheryeh inscription (in this case Sass believes that the archaizing letters on the mid-ninth century Fekheryeh inscription date back only several decades, to the early ninth century, rather than 200 years, to the eleventh century BCE, as most scholars

Both the content and the medium of these early Byblian texts point to a distinctly royal context for early Phoenician writing: largely inscribed on stone, the texts report the piety of the rulers and their building works (*KAI* nos. 4, 5, 6, 7) or invoke curses on those who disturb their coffins (*KAI* nos. 1, 2).[506] The media (a bronze spatula and a pottery cone) and locations of discovery (in the area of the temples) of those few early Phoenician texts not inscribed on stone likewise suggest an elite and probably also a cultic context for writing in late Iron I Byblos.[507]

It is curious that the extant epigraphic material of the tenth through the ninth centuries from Byblos almost exclusively features royal and formal texts, but no ostraca, graffiti, or seals.[508] What can be said about the texts from Byblos that have survived (thanks to their media: stone, ceramic cones, and bronze spatula) is that they reveal early efforts to articulate the piety and power of the rulers of Byblos in the local tradition of West Semitic alphabetic writing, rather than in the language of neighboring powers –

believe). Sass's theory results in some problematic conclusions, among which is (1) his claim that all of the Byblian inscriptions have to be archaizing; (2) the nearly complete lack of Old Canaanite inscriptions dating to the twelfth-tenth centuries from Phoenicia and northern Israel necessitated by his downdating of the Byblian and some of the Old Canaanite inscriptions; and (3) his compression of the time span into the space of only a few decades (instead of between 100 and 150 years) for the development of the Old Canaanite script into the Phoenician-Aramaic and Hebrew scripts.

[506] The funerary inscription on the coffin of King Ahiram of Byblos dating to ca. 1000 BCE (*KAI* no. 1) and found in Tomb V in the royal necropolis of Byblos appears to be contemporary with the inscription warning potential grave robbers of danger that is carved further up the tomb shaft (*KAI* no. 2). The inscription of Yehimilk (*KAI* no. 4) is a palimpsest written over an earlier pseudo-hieroglyphic inscription on a broken stone slab in which Yehimilk declares that he has restored the ruins of the temples of Byblos. The ca. 900 BCE Abi-baal and Eli-baal texts (*KAI* nos. 5, 6) were inscribed on the statues of the Egyptian pharaohs Shoshenq I (945-925 BCE) and Osorkon I (924-889), and dedicate the statues of these two dead Egyptian kings to their goddess. These last two texts use the same formula as the tenth (or ninth) century Shipit-baal I text (and indeed are restored on the basis of the Shipit-baal text), but the latter (*KAI* no. 7) refers to the dedication of a wall rather than a statue.

[507] Dating to the eleventh or tenth century, Byblos cone B was discovered in the area of the Obelisks Temple and bears a brief inscription reading *l'h'mbbd*, "belonging to 'Ahi'am s<on of> Bodi" (Sass 1988: 85-86). Another cone (Byblos cone A) may also have been found in the area of the Obelisks Temple; its inscription is considered to date solidly in the eleventh century, as it retains a few of the pictographic features of the proto-Canaanite script (Sass 1988: 79-80). The function and date of the pottery cones from Byblos, most of which have no inscription, have never been clarified. Only one of the five bronze spatulae discovered in the Byblos excavations bears a Phoenician inscription incised on one side; the other four bear pseudo-hieroglyphic inscriptions. The spatula with the Phoenician text has been dated to the tenth-ninth centuries, and was found near the surface in the area of the temples (Sass 1988: 86-87). Unfortunately none of the objects described above come from a clear archaeological context.

[508] It is inadvisable to make too much of this lack of less formal inscriptions at Byblos, as excavators have not even found the Iron Age site of Byblos. All analyses of Phoenician inscriptions must suffer from the fact, as observed by C. Asmar (2000: 43-49), that the archaeological work to be done on Phoenician sites in Lebanon faces often insurmountable difficulties. The modern political situation makes excavating these sites problematic, and the older layers of settlement in such cities as Tyre, Beirut, and Byblos were typically leveled in ancient times to make way for Hellenistic and Roman levels of occupation.

Egyptian hieroglyphs and Mesopotamian Akkadian. As far as can be determined given the limited data, this expression of local identity was an elite affair, as these early Phoenician texts exploited the monumental, non-documentary aspects of writing and clearly point to a royal context for writing.

Despite the lack of ostraca, graffiti, and seals from Byblos, it is quite probable more everyday texts, such as administrative and economic texts pertaining to trading activities, were being rendered on papyrus at Byblos (and the other coastal centers like Beirut, Sidon, and Tyre). Several epigraphers have observed that the letter shapes used for the stone inscriptions clearly developed from ink writing.[509] It is also possible that these administrative and economic texts on perishable materials were grouped into archival collections. Archival methods could conceivably have been passed down from Ugarit (before its destruction in the early twelfth century BCE) to Byblos and the other coastal centers of the southern Levant, or perhaps transmitted to these coastal centers in LB/early Iron I periods from Ugarit via sites in Canaan like Taanach and Aphek (where small "mini-archives" have been found dating to the LB Age). This is not a far-fetched scenario, as the contacts between Ugarit and several coastal cities of the southern Levant (Byblos, Beirut, 'Akko, Sidon, and Tyre) documented in Ugarit's archives reveal that these trading centers had already developed a scribal tradition in the earlier LB period.[510] Such a tradition (including the adoption of archival methods from Ugarit?) could have informed the renewed and re-energized scribal tradition of these same coastal centers during the Iron I period.

How did it come about that the coastal region spearheaded the development of the linear alphabetic technology? It was not simply because many of the trading centers along the Lebanese coast previously had developed a scribal tradition during the LB era, as attested by the contacts between Ugarit and Byblos, Beirut, Sidon, and Tyre. The

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[509] The significant shift in the formation of the alphabetic signs that occurred in the late Iron I inscriptions on stone from this coastal region likely stemmed from the adoption by the Phoenician scribes of the Egyptian way of writing with a pen-brush on papyrus. The difference in writing utensils and writing medium (sea-rush stem and ink on papyrus) led to numerous innovations in the early alphabetic script (G. van der Kooij 1987: 107-121; cf. Sass 2005: 50). Changes in the script during the tenth-ninth centuries included the stabilization of right-to-left writing and the elimination of mirror-image letters (see Naveh 1982: 42 for these developments and others). Unfortunately, the first inscriptions in ink writing thus far discovered date from 800 BCE.

[510] See Singer's essay on the "political history of Ugarit," in which he discusses Ugarit's foreign relations (1999: 603-733). Cf. Peckham 2001: 24-26.

reasons for the unique role of the coastal cities in the development of linear alphabetic writing and other technologies[511] are directly related to the fate that befell the political powers of the eastern Mediterranean, both large and small. In contrast to the rest of the West Semitic world, the Bronze-to-Iron Age transition appears to have been smoother in the southern coastal region. As a result, the cities of this region not only continued the trading activity they had long engaged in during the previous Late Bronze period, but quickly took advantage of the trading opportunities that opened up thanks to the dissolution of the Hittite Empire, the destruction of the largest trading center on the Levantine coast, Ugarit, and the weakening of Egypt.[512] The region's growing role as a trading power both spurred on and was enabled by the development of the local writing tradition into a useable system for all kinds of documents and inscriptions.

Indicative of the remarkable impact of this region's writing system is its spread in the ninth and eighth centuries beyond the confines of the Lebanese coast, reaching not only the regions of the eastern Mediterranean[513] but also eastward towards northern Syria. In fact, the tradition of writing royal inscriptions, long attested in the ANE world, may have been passed along to the fledgling Aramean kingdoms of Syria via these coastal trading centers. This would explain the penetration of Phoenician as a literary

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[511] The island of Cyprus may have also had a role in propelling this new technology forward. Colonizers from the Levantine coastal cities in the Phoenician region appear to have achieved dominance of the island over the course of the eleventh century: the development of linear alphabetic writing would have enabled the Phoenicians to administer their new colonies on Cyprus and to maintain Cyprus as a critical link in the maritime trade in the eastern Mediterranean and the eastern Aegean regions. (For the expansion of Phoenicia into both eastern and western Cyprus by the end of the eleventh century, see O. Negbi 1998: 87-93; there is some disagreement as to when this expansion took place; see I. Michaelidout-Nicolaou 1987: 331-388 for an alternative view).

[512] Two literary texts date to the early eleventh century and demonstrate that five of the primary coastal trading cities – Aradus, Byblos, Dor, Sidon, and Tyre – were in existence and functioning as active sea ports at the beginning of the eleventh century. The first is an account of the adventures of a temple official named Wen-Amun, who travels to Byblos to purchase timber in around 1075 BCE ("Story of Wen-Amun"). His journey carries him to the Phoenician towns of Dor, Sidon, and Tyre, in addition to Byblos. The papyrus recounting these events is nearly contemporary to the events it describes. The second contemporary document recounts the Mediterranean campaign of Tiglath-pileser I (1114-1076 BCE), during which he received tribute from Aradus, Byblos, and Sidon (see W. Ward 1994: 183-206 for a survey of these documents). Not mentioned in these texts but perhaps to be included in the chain of prosperous trading cities along the eastern Mediterranean coast is Beirut. Recent excavations in Beirut have uncovered an imposing fortification system dating to the Iron Age, as well as a number of artifacts (cf. Asmar 2000: 43-49 and Badre 2000: 941-961).

[513] According to Krahmalkov (2002), the Tyro-Sidonian dialect of Phoenician achieved the status of a *lingua franca* in parts of the Middle East for a brief time during the ninth-eighth centuries BCE. He notes the language of the inland city of Lachish, attested in several inscriptions and identified by him as "Lachishite Phoenician" (pp. 207-208 and note 2).

language in Syria from the late ninth through the seventh centuries BCE. [514] To the peoples of these coastal areas therefore can be attributed the establishment of a kind of "pan-Canaanite" tradition of writing, a tradition that represents the link between the limited scribal culture of second millennium Syria-Palestine and that of the later Iron II secondary polities.

Joffe and others have argued that the coastal cultures that spearheaded the formation of a pan-Canaanite tradition centered on the use of the linear alphabet be conceptualized as a state-like entity called "Phoenicia." Joffe has described how the emergence of Phoenicia during the eleventh and tenth centuries initiated a new process of elite emulation and competition that would eventually play a significant role in the development of "ethnic" states later in the Iron Age. Joffe's concept of "Phoenicia" as a state-like entity is problematic and anachronistic, however, as is his use of the term to signify a collective name of the first states to emerge along the Mediterranean coast.[515] What many scholars identity as "Phoenicia" was in reality a constellation of coastal sites active in the inland and maritime trade, each of whose power and influence waxed and waned at different periods in time across a span of around nine centuries (Joffe himself concedes that as a "collective" entity these cities were not particularly well integrated).

Another issue not dealt with in Joffe's analysis is the question of *when* the Phoenicians would have drawn their own ethnic boundaries to distinguish themselves from the Canaanites of the Akko plain and Galilee region. He appears to assume that Phoenicia, from the Iron I Age, was a political and cultural entity distinct from its inland neighbors. Such an assumption entails the maintenance of the traditional distinction

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[514] A large number of the inscriptions of northern Syrian kings were written in the Phoenician language, including the inscription of Kilamuwa King of Yaudi from Zinjirli (second half of the ninth century), and the Azitiwada inscription found at Karatepe in Cilicia (ancient Que; late eighth century) (Avishur 2000: 153-200). Other types of inscriptions in Phoenician are eighth century seals uncovered in Cilicia (Lebrun 1987: 23-33) and two seventh century magical and incantation amulets discovered at Arslan Tash in Upper Syria (written in Aramaic script in the Phoenician language) (Avishur 2000: 201-243). The ninth century Tel Fekheryeh inscription was written in an archaizing linear Phoenician script (used to render the Aramaic language) that dates back to the late eleventh century BCE (Cross 1995: 393-409). Naveh (1987) suggests that the letters on this inscription were copied from a Phoenician stela of the eleventh century (p. 109).
[515] The designation "Phoenician" was never even used by the "Phoenicians" themselves, but is a Greek term and as such dates no earlier than the eighth century BCE (and this only if we are to accept the controversial date of eighth century for Homer's *Iliad*, where the reference occurs). It cannot be known for certain if this Greek term "Phoenician" even meant a distinct ethnic group! From epigraphic sources dating to the first millennium, it would appear that the "Phoenicians," and frequently outsiders as well, saw themselves as inhabitants of a particular city (cf. D. Homès-Fredericq 1987: 89-96, N. Kantzios 2000: 1061-1066, G. Lehmann 2001: 65-112, and D. Vance 1994: 2-18).

between "Phoenicia" as a coastal entity and its so-called "expansion" to the east. In this view, the appearance of so-called "Phoenician" material cultural objects at various inland urban sites comprises evidence of a "Phoenician" presence (i.e. expansion).

The problem with trusting in archaeology to provide ethnic markers that signal the presence of a distinct group known to later antiquity as the Phoenicians was raised in the early 1990s by C.H.J. de Geus and more recently by N. Kantzios.[516] For example, Kantzios comments that the presence or absence of a supposed ethnic marker (such as bichrome ware or "Phoenician" shipping jars)[517] in tenth century coastal and inland urban sites of Canaan could be seen as "a function of different regional evolutions due to local needs and experiences or local potting traditions" rather than as proof that two distinct ethnic groups had emerged in these areas (i.e. Phoenician and Israelite).[518] She goes on to remark that scholars must not be too quick to "distinguish 'Phoenician' material culture from the general matrix of Iron Age Canaanite culture" and that it may be "premature to speak of Phoenicians at all until the ninth century."[519]

It may be, therefore, that the artifacts dating to the tenth and even ninth centuries BCE commonly interpreted as evidence for a Phoenician expansion into the inland parts of northern Canaan[520] instead should simply be seen as indicative of a revival of LB Canaanite culture during the Early Iron Age.[521] Given the evidence above, it seems

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[516] See de Geus 1991: 11-16 and Kantzios 2000: 1061-1066.

[517] Among the fine wares employed as ethnic markers, bichrome ware is not sufficiently specific enough to fulfill the task of ethnic marker, as it has been observed that "bichrome is a rather spontaneous minor development out of a wide-ranging Canaanite tradition common to all their cultural descendents, probably sparked by the success of Cypriot bichrome wares" (Kantzios 2000: 1063). The "Phoenician" shipping jar of the tenth century, an example of coarse wares, represents another type of pottery frequently used uncritically as an ethnic marker for the Phoenicians. Its discovery primarily in coastal sites has resulted in the equation of a "Phoenician" presence with the coast. Kantzios argues that "the vessel is simply a *coastal* jar: its form is adapted to the needs of sea transport, and so only those peoples dwelling on the littoral might be expected to use it" (*Ibid*). Some Phoenicians may not have lived along the coast, and therefore their presence may not have been indicated by this jar.

[518] Kantzios 2000: 1064. To put it more plainly, one should not limit the ethnic boundaries simply to the coastal and urban and therefore continue to use artifacts as ethnic markers injudiciously; the functional and regional variations of the domestic pottery assemblage must be taken into account.

[519] *Ibid*, 1065. It is pertinent to note that the script of both coastal and inland Canaanite cities was virtually indistinguishable up until the end of the ninth century.

[520] See, for example, the suggestion of E. Stern that the Phoenicans expanded into Northern Palestine during the second half of the eleventh century (Stern 1994: 103-104; 1991: 85-94), followed by Lehmann (2001: 90-91).

[521] In her analysis of the tenth century Canaanite-Phoenician burial at Kefar Veradim in the Upper Galilee region, Y. Alexandre concurs with Kantzios' assessment and identifies both the northern coast and its hinterland as far inland as the Upper Galilee to have been "a single settlement unit in the tenth century

unlikely that the inhabitants of the coastal cities would have viewed themselves as culturally or ethnically set apart from their inland neighbors during the Iron I period; their notion of identity was probably wrapped up in their respective cities.

In sum, whereas Joffe appears to be wrong in his assessment of "Phoenicia" as the primary model for statehood in early (Iron I) Levant, he is right to associate the initial innovations in the use of the alphabet as well as in arts and crafts with the cities of the coastal region. These seaside cities all offer the earliest Levantine examples of developments in ceramics, metal and ivory working, textiles, and coroplastic art,[522] and most importantly, of a wider use of the alphabet for commemorative, funerary, and votive inscriptions. Where Joffe appears to be on more solid ground, therefore, is in regarding these coastal sites as early instigators of the process of elite emulation that took place in the Levant. The evolution of disparate sites as a cultural and political entity known to later antiquity as "Phoenicia" was indeed new in the sense that it fostered new styles and a new technology of writing, and then disseminated these through emulation and *perhaps* some expansion. As the coastal region gained a more dominant role in the Iron Age Levant as a trading force and as a political and cultural power, its organizational methods and elite culture became at least one of the blueprints[523] for emerging elites in the Levant who were interested in tailoring these elite concepts and organizational methods to their own local societies.

Writing and Literacy in Inland Canaan during the Tenth Century BCE

To conclude this chapter, something must be said about the limited repertoire of inscriptions uncovered at inland Canaanite sites and dating to the tenth century BCE. These traces of writing must be viewed within the context of the socio-political developments that took place in the region that would later in the Iron II period come to comprise the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and that were earlier summarized in this

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BCE." (2002: 69*). Kantzios suggests that the designation Neo-Canaanite or Late Canaanite be applied to this people who were present in the Early Iron Age, as these terms are less weighed down by preconceived notions.
[522] See the essays in S. Moscati 1988 (*The Phoenicians*).
[523] A convincing case can be made for the transmission of important concepts of state formation to Canaan from the new Aramean states as well (by the ninth century/beginning of the Iron II period) (see Sass 2005: 51-52, 61-66). Alternatively, one could argue that Aramean models of statehood had early on been joined with Phoenician technologies of writing, and together provided the model for other Levantine entities.

chapter. In brief, these developments consisted of "a revival of the Canaanite cultural and territorial-political system of the second millennium BCE" in the northern valleys,[524] and strong wave of settlement in the highland regions to the north and south. In both the northern and southern region of inland Canaan, the few settlements of any size (Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer, Lachish, and Jerusalem) all appear to have been seats of governments of small regional city-states that only later coalesced into larger state-like entities. As noted above, much of inland and coastal Canaan shared a common culture: the so-called "Phoenician" character of the material cultural evidence found in the coastal hinterland and in the Upper Galilee may well reflect the indigenous Phoenician presence inland as well as along the coastal strip of northern Canaan and Lebanon.

The evidence pertaining to writing and literacy in the tenth (as well as the ninth) centuries is frustratingly sparse and reveals little about either the identity or ideology of the emergent elite. The study of alphabetic inscriptions in Israel conducted over ten years ago by R. Renz found that only twenty-two items can be securely dated to the tenth and ninth centuries;[525] moreover, for the regions that would come to be divided into Israel and Judah, Renz listed only four inscriptions dating to the tenth century![526] In recent years, the number has expanded slowly: two new short inscriptions in alphabetic script dating to the tenth century have been uncovered at Tel Rehov in the Lower Galilee region and at Beth Shemesh in the Shephelah;[527] in Upper Galilee, a bronze bowl inscribed with the name of its owner was discovered in a burial cave at Kefar Veradim and dated by its excavator to the tenth century;[528] and finally, an enigmatic inscription consisting of the

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[524] Finkelstein 2003a: 90. Cf. also Whitelam 2002: 394-400 and Finkelstein 2003b: 85-98. The main centers of this "New Canaan" (according to the Low Chronology) were Megiddo VIA, Iron I Tel Rehov, Tell Kinneret, Tel Dor and possibly Tell Keisan on the coast. Finkelstein (2003a) maintains that these sites were centers of city-states, and he writes that "Almost all features of their material culture – pottery, metallurgical, and architectural traditions; layout of the main cities; and settlement patterns in the countryside – show clear continuation of the second millennium traditions" (p. 90).

[525] Renz 1995: III: 3-4.

[526] The four inscriptions listed by Renz are the small inscribed limestone tablet found at Gezer (1995: I: 30-37, Taf. I:1) and three short inscriptions from Tel Batash (on a pottery bowl; 1995: I: 30, Taf. I:4), Tel 'Amal (on a jar; 1995: I: 29-30, Taf. I:3), and Khirbet Rosh Zayit (in ink on a pottery sherd; 1995: I: 37-39, Taf. I:2) Also see Renz III: 3-4. The Gezer tablet might be classified as Byblian, however – see Naveh 1982: 65, 76-77 and Peckham 2001: 22. A. Mazar (2003a) adds Arad Inscription No. 81 (Renz 1995: I: 46-47, Taf. II:4), attributed to Stratum XII, to this short list of tenth century inscriptions (p. 182).

[527] For the inscription from Tel Rehov, see A. Mazar 2003a:171-184 and 2003b: 85-98. For the short inscription on a stone object from Beth Shemesh, see S. Bunimovitz and Z. Lederman 1997: 29-30.

[528] Alexandre 2002: 65*-74*. The inscription, engraved with a sharp point around the inside base of the bowl, reads *ks psh bn šm* ("the cup of *Psh* son of Shema"). This is the longest inscription from this period,

twenty-two symbols of the Northwest Semitic alphabet inscribed on the surface of a forty-pound stone was found embedded in a wall at Tel Zayit, a site thirty kilometers inland from Ashkelon, an ancient Philistine port.[529]

The small corpus of tenth century alphabetic inscriptions is characterized by their brevity and by the fact that their distribution encompasses a wide area, just as in the previous Iron I period.[530] It is noteworthy that not a single inscription dating to the tenth century comes from the central highlands (western hill country); if it is possible to speak of clusters of inscriptions (given the extremely small data pool), then both the southern coastal plain and the Galilee region could be singled out as areas where such clusters occur.[531] Unfortunately, the social and political context of these inscriptions is extremely ambiguous. The Kefar Veradim bowl most clearly belongs to an elite context, as it was entombed in a burial cave that appears to have belonged to a noble family of Canaanite-Phoenician origin.[532] The seemingly formal monumental character of the Tel Zayit inscription (inscribed as it is on a forty-pound limestone bolder with individually well-drawn letters) is belied by the fact that the letters of the abecedary stagger up and down over the surface of the stone; this lends the inscription the character of a graffito rather than a formal monument.[533] This abecedary may have been used in cult rituals and then embedded in a wall to ward off evil, as the alphabet may have been viewed as possessing

excluding the "Gezer calendar." An eleventh-tenth century limited chronological range is suggested by the comparative paleographic analysis of the inscription on the bowl. Ascertaining a date for the bowl is also aided, according to Alexandre, by its archaeological context. It was entombed in the burial cave along with a collection of domestic ware and high-quality Cypro-Phoenician Black-on-Red pottery, a repertoire that date to the tenth century BCE (*Ibid*, 68*).

[529] R. Tappy, *et al*. 2006: 5-46. The excavators date this inscription to the late tenth century BCE, based upon a fairly secure archaeological context. The wall that contained the Tel Zayit inscription belonged to a structure that suffered heavy destruction by fire sometime in the late tenth century BCE. Accumulating to a depth of over one meter, multiple deposits overlay this structure and sealed the destruction debris. According to the excavators, these deposits represent two distinct building levels ranging from the ninth through the early eighth centuries BCE. These strata provide a date before which the stone-walled structure must have been built and the inscription incised.

[530] Tel 'Amal is five km west of Beth Shean, on the edge of the Valley of Jezreel (bordering the central highlands); Tel Batash (ancient Timnah) is situated 8 km NW of Beth Shemesh, in the coastal plain of Philistia; Khirbet Rosh Zayit lies 1½ km north of Kabul, in the coastal plain of Phoenicia (bordering the Upper Galilee region), and Tel Gezer is around 7 km south of Gath, in the coastal plain of Philistia. The locations of the other tenth century inscriptions have been given above.

[531] The southern coastal plain (of Philistia) has produced three inscriptions (and four if the inscribed stone object at Beth Shemesh is counted, given its location in the Shephelah adjacent to the coastal plain). The Galilee region has produced two inscriptions (and three if the ink inscription on a pottery sherd from Rosh Zayit is counted, given its close proximity to Upper Galilee).

[532] Alexandre 2002: 69*.

[533] Tappy, *et al*. 2006: 42.

an apotropaic function.[534] The equally enigmatic Gezer inscription (or "calendar"),

which describes an agricultural year, may have had a magical or votive function tied to

agricultural life.[535] As far as can be told, therefore, these tenth-century inscriptions are

related to elite activity, and more specifically to a local elite of priests, merchants, and

perhaps others.[536]

What can be said about the function of writing and the extent of literacy at inland

Canaanite sites during this late Iron I period, given the paucity of inscriptions? Clearly,

the meager number of mundane inscriptions and the brevity of their contents points to a

very limited role for writing.[537] Even if people were using other, more perishable media

on which to write (such as papyrus), the scarcity of inscriptions on pottery and the lack of

monumental inscriptions does not suggest a highly literate culture, one with archives and

other sophisticated methods of transmitting written information. While it is probable that

the city-states of the tenth century "New Canaan" system in the northern valleys

employed scribes, they appear to have done so on an even more limited scale then did the

city-states of the LB period.[538] It would appear next to impossible that any of these

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[534] The thesis of R. Byrne regarding the continued existence of scribalism during the Iron I Age, which
somewhat parallels this chapter's proposal regarding the survival of a culture of scribalism during this
poorly documented period, appeared in an article (2007: 1-31) shortly after this chapter was completed.
Like this chapter, Byrne connects the survival and reproduction of the trade of scribalism to elite patronage.
He does well to stress how the downturn in Iron I written commissions in Canaan (relative to the writing
activity of the prevous LB Age) points to an ever more restricted access to writing outside of elite circles
during the twelfth to tenth centuries BCE, and to stress the "circumstantially specific applications" of the
early alphabet in Iron I Canaan (p. 17). These applications, as is made clear in the discussion of Iron I
inscriptions that appears in this chapter, related to the commissioning of alpahbeti writing on prestige
objects by elites, to render these objects even more prestigious in a socio-economic environment of scribal
scarcity (see in particular Byrne 2007: 12-17).

[535] J. Crenshaw 1998: 106. Other scholars have suggested that the inscription may have been a lesson in
learning to write on a stone tablet (cf. Davies 2002: 273, Demsky 1988: 13, Lemaire 1988: 10-11), although
why writing would have been taught using stone rather than the easier and ubiquitous medium of pottery is
a mystery.

[536] Mazar 2003a: 171-184.

[537] Scholars who are bothered by the apparent lack of significant literacy and the ramifications this has for
the existence of the tenth century state dismiss the absence of monumental inscriptions from this early
period as the result of pure chance in the discovery of such artifacts, and they assume that many more
inscriptions were written on perishable materials (such as papyrus and parchment) (see for example Mazar
2003a: 90; Millard 1998: 36-37; and Schniedewind 2004: 61). Such assumptions, while not lacking an
element of feasibility, nonetheless falter when confronted with the overwhelming dearth of inscriptions on
less perishable materials such as stone and pottery (particularly in contrast with explosion in number of
such inscriptions later in the Iron period), and from the complete lack of inscriptions dating to the tenth
century from Jerusalem and from highland sites, supposedly the nexus of the tenth century state.

[538] Unlike the article by Byrne cited above, this project does not situate all attestations of scribal activity
"on the periphery of the Iron I political economy" (Byrne 2007: 1). Later building activity as well as

nascent polities, including that of tenth century Jerusalem, would have developed an independent written tradition and scribal schools; at most, there would have been a small community of scribes to keep everyday records, and to communicate with other states and kingdoms. The fact that the linear alphabet was neither standardized nor consistently intelligible during this Iron I period shows that it subsisted largely on "elite wherewithal rather than political or economic exigency."[539]

It is evident, therefore, that the linear alphabet, while in principle an easier writing system to use, did not in-and-of-itself motivate a dramatic shift in literacy rates. Writing, whether in the coastal region or further inland, appears to have been dominated by the interests of a small caste of local elites. W. Schniedewind, S. Niditch, J. Crenshaw and others have done well therefore to stress the orality of the culture of the southern Levant, particularly that of the early highland groups. The attribution of an overwhelmingly oral character to this society does not categorically deny that the early highland settlers knew of writing at all, only that it would take the development of the state to really boost the level and sophistication of writing activity. Clearly, the village culture of these settlers did not provide a context that was particularly conducive to the development of writing; nevertheless, there likely would have been a few people who had the capacity for writing brief texts. Still, an agrarian and pastoral society such as existed in early Iron Age Palestine had very little need for writing. And at this early date, the transmission of traditions was very likely a mostly oral process.

Conclusion

As observed at the beginning of this chapter, the story of the West Semitic alphabet and the social-political circumstances in which it developed during the LB and Iron periods is one of both disruption and continuity. The disruptive aspect has long gained the upper hand in analyses of this period, and its effects are certainly the easiest to trace: all along the eastern Mediterranean, trading centers and city-states were toppled, empires weakened or disappeared, and with the fading and destruction of these LB entities came the end of the alphabetic cuneiform script of Ugarit and the disappearance

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destruction layers dating to the Iron II period doubtless destroyed most vestiges of the limited Iron I scribal activity taking place at these tenth century sites.
[539] Byrne 2007: 23.

of Akkadian as the language of international correspondence in the northern and southern Levant.

Harder to trace yet nonetheless present is the thread of continuity in Canaan that runs through the LB and Iron I transition: the apparent survival of the seaports along the northern coast of the southern Levant, and the Iron I revival of LB-type city-states in the northern valleys parallels a degree of continuity in the sphere of writing and literacy. This continuity is most evident in the persistence of the alphabetic script, first attested as early as the MB Age, and in the social categories using writing. As far as the data from Byblos and the limited attestations of writing from sites in inland Canaan are concerned, the use of writing remained restricted to the elite spheres – royal, priestly, and military.

Where the use of writing shifted significantly was in its emergence at Byblos (and probably at other coastal sites) in the late Iron I period as the means for expressing a new pan-Canaanite tradition of writing. In the previous LB period, there were indications for writing's use as an expression of local identity in the Canaano-Akkadian of the LB Canaanite city-states attested in the Amarna Letters, and in the literary texts in alphabetic cuneiform discovered at Ugarit. But these languages do not seem to have been anything more than distinctive scribal languages, and never achieved the status of "national" languages. Indeed, the Canaano-Akkadian of the Amarna Letters was essentially a dialect of Akkadian, the *lingua franca* of the MB and LB Mediterranean world. And Ugarit's scribes relegated its cuneiform alphabetic language to distinct categories of use. It was through the use of the language (Akkadian) of another, more dominant, culture that these societies legitimized themselves over against the dominant cultures reigning in the eastern Mediterranean world.

In the cities of the Lebanese coast, and later in the inland sites of Canaan, local dialects of the local language, North-West Semitic, became one of the markers that distinguished them from each other and from the larger players in the Mediterranean region in the following Iron Age. The earliest examples of this development come from Byblos, where, for the first time, local rulers sought to convey their power and identity in monumental form and in a local language. Yet the use of the West Semitic linear alphabet as a means for articulating a local ethnic identity, while initiated at Byblos and

perhaps other Phoenician cities, did not realize its full expression until the fracturing of the language into several dialects later in the following Iron II period.

To conclude this chapter and pave the way for the developments analyzed in subsequent chapters, it is important therefore to take note of the lack of a strong local orientation for the limited writing activity of this period, as demonstrated by "the linguistic and paleographic affinities" that are apparent in the different West Semitic alphabets and inscriptions.[540] In other words, Phoenician, Aramaic, and Hebrew alphabets were indistinguishable in the tenth century BCE. Whatever new entities were emerging in the highlands of Palestine, they remained participants in a larger cultural context that continued even after the destruction of the Late Bronze Age city-states at the end of the second millennium BCE. As will be evident in the analysis provided in the next two chapters, the emergence of what would become a new phenomenon in the Southern Levantine area, the "ethnic" or "ethnicized" state, does not appear to have occurred until the late ninth century at the earliest. At this point the wider use of West Semitic alphabetic writing, together with its division into various "national" dialects and scripts, functioned as one of the major expressions of this Iron II period development.

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[540] Schniedewind 2004: 47.

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Chapter 4

Literacy and Writing in Israel and the Transjordan during the Late Iron Age
(ca. 925 – 550 BCE)

Introduction

All studies of Levantine epigraphy concur that the quantity of written artifacts does increase in the southern Levant[541] over the course of the Late Iron Age (Iron II; ca. 925 – 550 BCE),[542] and that this proliferation of inscribed materials in some way parallels the rise of small, regional states along the eastern Mediterranean. The examinations of writing in the Iron II Cisjordan and Transjordan, the regional focus of this chapter, inevitably devote a good deal of space to listing the occurrences of writing and dividing them into analytical categories (monumental inscriptions, seals, letters, etc.). These lists, and the relative frequency of inscriptions therein, are then typically harnessed to overarching arguments concerning the presence of a state and the development of its bureaucracy vis-à-vis other regions in the southern Levant.

Such lists of course comprise a useful source of data, but their repetition in article after article highlights one of the primary problems extant in the academic analysis of writing and literacy in the Iron II Levant: that writing is assigned a role simply as a tool of the state; indeed, the various attestations of writing and their relative frequency commonly is employed as one of the traits by which the formation of a state can be identified. As has been seen in the preceding Late Bronze (LB) Age, and indeed, in other ancient Near Eastern (ANE) cultures, it has certainly proven to be the case that the

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[541] The southern Levant refers to all of the territory south of the headwaters of the Orontes River and west of the Syrian Desert, including present-day Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian territories.

[542] The end of the Iron II period in the southern Levant is traditionally held to be 587/586 BCE. Since this date is based on the destruction of Jerusalem in Judah by the Babylonians, it is hardly an appropriate terminus for the Iron Age II in the Transjordan. Many recent studies of the Iron Age in the Transjordan choose 550 BCE (roughly marking the end of the Neo-Babylonian period and the beginning of the Persian period) instead.

intellectual domain of writing was typically enlisted in the service of the state (or city-state) administration. Yet to identify writing merely as a state-wielded tool, and to identify its presence or absence simply as one of the primary indicators for the existence of a state, is to misunderstand the nature of writing in the Levantine world as an "embodied practice."

What is meant by referring to writing as "an embodied practice"? Writing does not function in a vacuum as simply a tool, employed by the mechanism of the state, for managing information. Those who learn to read and write are specific people learning to write "in a particular mode, according to particular conventions and in relation to particular contexts."[543] By implication, the domain of writing therefore represents a point of division in the social fabric of a society between those who can and those who cannot write.[544] In the ancient world, where an oral aesthetic prevailed, this typically meant that writing tended to be monopolized by the domain of elite activity. Writing nonetheless affected the illiterate as well as the literate, as the former would have attributed to words a transformative, magical power related to the power of divinity.[545]

It is helpful at this point to cite B. Routledge's adaptation of P. Bourdieu's concept of social "fields" to writing in the Iron Age.[546] As argued by Routledge, the role of writing in the Iron Age is illuminated if it can be considered, rather than simply a tool for managing information, instead as a "specific social practice constituted by interrelated sites, embodied skills, and culturally transmitted information." Writing can be said to represent such a domain, since it "involved specific technologies, knowledge, and textual genres that were learned and hence transmitted over time."[547] As Bourdieu makes clear, literacy enables particular groups in a society to "preserve and accumulate in objectified form the cultural resources [that society] has inherited from the past," and to monopolize (totally or in part) "the society's symbolic resources … by monopolizing the instruments for appropriation of those resources (writing, reading, and other decoding techniques) henceforward preserved not in memories but in texts."[548] In the case of writing in Iron II

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[543] B. Routledge 2004: 188.
[544] P. Bourdieu 1989: 14-25; cf. Routledge 2004: 188.
[545] See S. Niditch 1996: 39-59.
[546] Routledge 2004: 187-190; cf. Bourdieu 1977: 183-197.
[547] Routledge 2004: 187.
[548] Bourdieu 1977: 186-187.

southern Levant, the scribal conventions and textual types initiated by the older Syrian-Canaanite cultures and then transmitted by the cities along the Phoenician coast carried on to inform the emergent scribal culture of the new polities of the Cisjordan and Transjordan regions.

Routledge concludes that the process of state formation in the late Iron Age certainly "entrained" the field of writing for its purposes, but that *it did not create this field.* As an example, he mentions how the production of the Mesha Inscription in the mid-ninth century BCE, well before the appearance of any evidence for epigraphic materials witnessing administrative practices in the region, points to the circulation of scribal knowledge prior to the emergence of a Moabite state with its administrative needs. Hence, state formation in the Levant during the Iron II period certainly did not initiate scribal knowledge; nonetheless, each Levantine state harnessed both the symbolic and practical aspects of writing to articulate its hegemony as an entity with political boundaries and a discrete identity (or ethnicity) that distinguished it from other Levantine polities. State formation therefore created the conditions in which writing's uses could be expanded into different spheres, and also increased the incidences of general exposure to written products in the southern Levantine societies.

Yet state formation did not encompass all of writing's uses; as states formed in the Cisjordan and Transjordan over the course of the Iron II period, the epigraphic record points to experimentation with the symbolic, transformative function of writing, as well as to the performance of a greater variety of textual practices, not all of which are so evidently intertwined with the practices of state agents. As will be touched on in this chapter but explored more fully in Chapter 5 on literacy and writing in ancient Judah, writing's symbolic, non-documentary, and experimental uses were exploited more and more frequently in non-royal, unofficial contexts (as witnessed by the graffiti phenomenon).

Within the context of this chapter, the focus will be on how written productions, as well as other categories of material culture, facilitated the dissemination of new ideologies related to state formation and ethnicity to literate and non-literate alike, through the display of various symbols of identity. Because the dissemination of new ideologies in the emergent polities of the Iron II Levant transpired through material

culture, it is better to identify these new entities not as "ethnic" states, but (following A. Joffe) as "ethnicizing" states, in that they were "constructions, not natural entities."[549]

As will be argued in this as well as the subsequent two chapters, the emergence of these ethnicizing states provided a likely context for the composition of literature connected with the articulation of state hegemony and with the related project of fixing (i.e. writing down) the liturgical repertoire of a national cult. As an embodied practice and as a repository of scribal conventions and textual types transmitted from Phoenicia via Israel/Samaria to Judah (and to the Transjordan), the field of writing was a cultural resource from which the scribal and priestly elite of Jerusalem, under royal sponsorship, could draw to project a political and religious unity, as well as a common history for a mixed population. Writing's critical role in the process of state formation and dissimulation of ideologies in the southern Levant therefore has particular relevance for the overarching concern of this project – the potential creation of literary texts in Iron II Judah that may have become source documents for the later written formulation of a biblical tradition.

The pages of the following chapter will treat the southern Levantine context for Judah's development as an ethnicizing state and its concomitant assertion of state hegemony through the medium of written productions as well as other categories of material culture. These developments were not an isolated phenomenon, but a regional one; assessing the material-cultural and epigraphic record of each ethnicizing state and the connection of this record to the articulation of each state's hegemony will help shed light on this process in Judah, and in turn, help clarify how and why a literary tradition may have developed.

First, the archaeological literature on the southern Levant regarding state formation in the Iron II period will be surveyed with an eye towards critiquing the assumptions that underlie many treatments of the archaeological data from the Cisjordan and the Transjordan, those regions typically seen as divided during this period into the

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[549] Joffe 2002: 437. This study accepts the proposal of Joffe that the primary indicators for the organization of an "ethnic" identity is the coalescing of "certain behaviors, symbols, and historical evidence," (p. 426), and that the developments demonstrating the formation of such an ethnic identity in the archaeological record are the widespread use of symbolism as well as particular forms of administration.

polities named Israel, Judah, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Phoenicia,[550] and Aram-
Damascus.[551] (In this as well as in subsequent sections of this chapter, a full discussion
of state formation in Judah and the uses to which writing was put in that region will be
reserved for the succeeding chapter.) The focus will then shift to the data regarding
writing and literacy in the Transjordan as well as in the region traditionally known as
Israel (often referred to in ancient sources as Samaria; henceforth termed "Israel").
Rather than simply listing off incidences of inscriptions and labeling them
"administrative," "monumental," "cultic," etc., as is frequently and repetitively done in
many treatments to date, this section will seek to explore how writing as a cultural
resource[552] came to play such a critical role in the process of state formation and in the
dissemination of new ideologies connected with new ethnic categories and boundaries.
In order to accomplish this task, this study will concentrate on the different spheres of
political, economic, and social activity in which writing came to be used by offering a
close examination of the various contexts in which incidences of writing dating to the
Iron II period appear in these regions. (In the past, very little attention has been given to
the context, when it is known, in which inscriptions have been found.)

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[550] Phoenicia will not be treated in as much detail in this chapter as the other polities named above because
the limited and sporadic nature of the finds from Phoenicia proper does not permit us to say very much
about the Iron II Phoenicians in the southern Levant, and because no significant Phoenician inscription
dating to the Iron II period has been found in the southern Levant yet. (Much more is known about the
Phoenicians from the regions they colonized throughout the Mediterranean; Phoenician inscriptions were
being produced outside the homeland as far away as the island of Sardinia, where the Nora inscription was
found.) For a brief survey of the archaeological data related to the Phoenician cities, particularly the
primary centers of Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos (and their domination of cities along the coast as far as modern
Tel Aviv), see B. Peckham 2001: 24-26.
[551] The role of Aram-Damascus as one of the main regional powers of the southern Levant will be
discussed throughout this chapter, but it will not receive its own individual treatment because the body of
archaeological and epigraphic data from Aram proper is still so limited. Regarding Aram-Damascus, W.
Pitard (1994) has observed that: "Historical information about this kingdom is limited almost exclusively to
external sources" (e.g. the Hebrew bible and Assyrian inscriptions) (p. 216). No documents from Aram-
Damascus have yet been discovered (although a few short inscriptions may have originated there; see note
583 below). None of the excavations in Damascus have yet reached the Iron Age levels of the Aramean
city.
[552] By referring to writing as a cultural resource, this study follows Routledge (2004: 184) in identifying it
as a learned practice or tradition that was already available in "local forms of social life."

State Formation in the Southern Levant during the Ninth – Early Sixth Centuries BCE

It is broadly conceded that the general trajectory of development in the Cisjordan and Transjordan regions during the beginning of the Iron II period proceeded along the following lines. The ninth and eighth centuries witnessed significant changes in the socio-political landscape: in the Cisjordan, the divergence of the northern highlands from the southern highlands (in terms of following a different path of development), and the partitioning of regions on both sides of the Jordan River into "a patchwork of small states, each striving to construct its own ethnic identity."[553] In the lowlands, the major centers of what I. Finkelstein terms "New Canaan" were suddenly destroyed, either in the late tenth or early ninth century.[554]

Extra-biblical references, namely royal and victory stelae, indicate the subsequent emergence in the ninth century of a new, locally dominant, power (Israel) in the northern highlands and lowlands. The contents of royal inscriptions dating to the mid-late ninth century from Moab and Tel Dan likewise signal the relative complexity of and consolidation of power in ninth century Israel. These two inscriptions also make mention of a separate polity (Judah) with its own dynastic line in the southern highlands,[555] but it is far from clear how developed this entity was as a state in the ninth and eighth centuries (or even if it could be considered as such until later in the Iron II period; see Chapter 5). Local dynasties making nationalistic claims were being set up in areas east of the Jordan River (Moab, Ammon, and perhaps Edom), and by the late eighth century the city-states of Philistia had managed to assert their political autonomy.[556]

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[553] Joffe 2002: 452.

[554] Finkelstein 2003: 79. For more on Finkelstein's "New Canaan," the possible agent(s) of its destruction, and what followed its dissolution see pp. 193-194 below.

[555] Mention is made of the king of Israel "who oppressed Moab many days" and of a king Omri who ruled after him in the Mesha Inscription (c. 850 BCE); the stele distinguishes Israel from the "House of David," from whom the Moabites had reclaimed a southern area (Routledge 2000: 247-250). The "Black Obelisk" of Shalmaneser III (c. 853 BCE) names and portrays Jehu, son of Omri, offering up gifts to the Assyrian king (J. Pritchard 1969: 281). Finally, the "King of Israel" and the "House of David" are mentioned in the two fragments of the Tel Dan inscription (c. 805 BCE) (A. Biran and J. Naveh 1995: 1-8 and 1993: 81-98).

[556] See S. Gitin 1998: 162-183. Gitin maintains that Philistia continued to be dominated by the influence of its neighbors Phoenicia and Judah until the late eighth century, when it became "more powerful than Judah and prospered as a result of the impact of the Neo-Assyrian Empire" (p. 164). That "the Philistines were recognized as a distinct group with their own land and cities as late as the 7th century" is indicated by the mention in Neo-Assyrian texts of Assyria's relations with *Palaštu* (Philistia), and its city-states of *Amqarrūna* (Ekron), *Asdūdu* (Ashdod), *Hāzat* (Gaza), and *Isqalūna* (Ashkelon).

While this study has no quibble to make with the portrait of the early Iron II period in the southern Levant given above, before taking a closer look at the development of each individual state it is necessary to examine the question of *what* exactly is meant by a state in the southern Levant during this period, particularly in light of the fact that the Levantine polities never came close to their Mesopotamian and Egyptian neighbors in terms of social complexity and a sophisticated administrative infrastructure (although the evidence from Assyrian inscriptions indicates that Phoenicia, Israel, and Aram-Damascus were major players in the Levantine political scene). Accompanying this issue is the problem of *how* the development of each state can be measured in the material-cultural record.

In the growing array of archaeological literature devoted to state formation in the Cisjordan and Transjordan regions during the Iron II, the strategy for empirically gauging the development of the state typically seeks to demarcate the specific administrative practices of a given state through observation of various categories of evidence (for examples of such categories, see below, pp. 191-192). The primary problem with this strategy is that it tends to impose exotic models borrowed from studies of the more developed civilizations of the ANE world, or worse, from much later periods and distant lands.[557] Moreover, it presumes, based at least in part on biblical sources, that the Iron Age nation-states of the Cisjordan and Transjordan were hypostatized entities just waiting for the right circumstances in which to form. Recent alternative analyses of the emergence of increasingly culturally integrated ethnic states in the southern Levant have proven more effective at conceiving state formation as a process in which divergent practices are concretized into a polity that has no solidity or unity as an abstract "thing" but is nonetheless recognizable as a named agency, and of situating this process within its local, Levantine context (rather than a biblical one).

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[557] One example of the application of a modern construct to the ancient Levantine world is the imposition of the tribal state model onto the analyses of Ammon, Moab, and Edom. Although it provides key interpretive insights well suited to the case of the Transjordanian states in particular, the tribal state model is based on modern ethnographic studies of twentieth century tribes (the Nuer tribe, in the case of the study made by Evans-Pritchard, 1940). For further problems associated with the application of a modern construct, the tribal state model, to the analysis of the Transjordanian polities, see below (pp. 220-221). Another example of the application of foreign models to the southern Levantine context can be found in the work of E.W. Heaton. Heaton (1994) posits the existence of a systematic education system and an extensive network of archives and libraries in Iron Age Judah based on analogies with Egypt and Mesopotamia, even though such speculation is belied by the archaeological and epigraphic data.

In a study of what he terms "secondary states"[558] in the southern Levant, Joffe has emphasized both the newness of the phenomenon as well as its local character. While acknowledging that these politically ingenues, particularly Israel, Judah, Ammon, and Moab, were profoundly affected by their interaction with more developed neighboring polities, he nonetheless stresses that they managed to deploy new ways of integrating their disparate identities into a collective entity, through the joining of local elite and non-elite concepts.

In other words, in the construction of an ethnic identity, the ancient pattern of elites reorganizing labor, land, and ideas to their own advantage (seen in the previous MB and LB periods in Canaan) encountered and interacted with the lower social levels' conception of their own identity, based on kinship and regional location. Hence, the existence on a basic social level of kinship ties in the form of lineages[559] underlay the formation in the elite sphere of dynasties and dynastic traditions, which reflected the primary concern of the Iron Age Levantine palaces (sustaining dynastic legitimacy). The development of ethnicity was greatly aided by the creation of dynastic traditions such as the "House of David" by the Iron Age elites, "for these dynasties were intimately connected to religious traditions around which the state as a whole then accreted."[560] The king and his descendents were portrayed already in the ninth century as selected by patron deities like Yahweh and Kemosh, deities for whom local cults doubtless existed.

Joffe compellingly argues that developments in writing and language (with its divisions into various dialects and scripts by the ninth century), along with other elements of material culture and particular forms of administration, demonstrate the formation of these new ethnic identities in the southern Levant over the course of the Iron II period.

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[558] While the term "secondary state" is convenient in that it highlights the decidedly non-classic features of the Iron Age Levantine states, its use must be qualified. To paraphrase Routledge (2004), the concept of a secondary state envisions the formation of certain states as adaptive responses to the territorial or economic encroachment of pre-existent states; in other words, societies on the periphery of these pre-existent states re-organize themselves into states in reaction to the competitive environment engendered by the expansions of the pre-existent states. If one views states not as "things" but as "the emergent effects of specific human practices," however, then it is not possible to see these societies as simply waiting for a specific set of conditions to prevail in order for them to re-organize themselves into the new form of the state. The problem instead becomes one of explaining how "divergent practices come to be channeled along complementary pathways so as to give the state its paradoxical existence as a named agency with no body" (pp. 7-8).
[559] The existence of such kinship ties is attested with some certainty at least in Israel in the contents of the famous Samaria ostraca; for more on these ostraca, see below (pp. 200, 239-241).
[560] Joffe 2002: 453.

Joffe's study relies on the strategy already deployed in several archaeological studies of material culture[561] which concentrates on tracing out patterns in various artifact repertoires and correlating these with political boundaries in order to make a case for the "national culture" linked to the state.[562]

In a more recent study, Routledge eschews a taxonomic categorization of the Iron II Levantine states based on trait formation in favor of what he terms "a performative orientation focused on practices and intellectual products."[563] Routledge compellingly points out that states are not "things", i.e. as entities they are not holistic totalities; rather they are the *effect* of a process of state formation in which a moral order orients "action through the binding of force and consent."[564] Routledge terms this process "state hegemony," and he describes state hegemony as the effort to "set limits and to define the possibilities of existence within its domain."[565] In the case of the Iron II states, the efforts to assert political dominance were so effective because they were informed by established forms of identification already extant in early Iron I communities. By casting the state as an extension of kinship and community loyalties, rather than as a rival to these entities, the kings in the southern Levant therefore were able to harness both cultural resources in community organization (such as genealogy) as well as intellectual products (such as royal inscriptions) in the construction of their territories as regions to which they could lay claim. As the Iron II period progressed, the process of state formation, by "coupling diverse social fields" (such as writing, agricultural production, and military activity), made possible the emergence of new possibilities in social and political activities and relationships.[566]

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[561] Cf. L. Herr 1999: 219-237 and 1997: 115-183; R. Kletter 1999: 19-54.

[562] This strategy is not without its critics. Routlege, for example, observes that this approach is constrained by its failure to examine fully *why* exactly the territory of particular Iron Age polities (which is historically attested by both local and Neo-Assyrian inscriptions) should correlate with particular patterns of material culture. To put it another way, why should distributional patterns in the archaeological record have coincided so cleanly with historically attested territories? What one needs to do, according to Routledge, is "to account for how the boundary effects of state formation might have entrained distinct fields of social practice (e.g., pottery making, domestic ritual, economic exchange, etc.), constraining their development in a locally homogenous and globally distinct manner" (p. 191).

[563] Routledge 2004: 214.

[564] *Ibid*, 215.

[565] *Ibid*. It is from the writings of the Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci that Routledge borrows the concept of "hegemony" as a means of conceiving of state formation.

[566] *Ibid*, 217.

It is illustrative to quote directly from Routledge's work regarding his envisioning of the process of state hegemony in Moab, the territory that is the primary focus of his investigation, especially as his observations have much potential for describing similar developments that had already taken place in Israel, the entity defeated by Mesha:

> "In the case of Moab, it [state hegemony] involved on the one hand the assertion that such a totality existed (i.e., a uniform sacralized land entrusted to the king [as expressed in the Mesha Stele]) and on the other hand a series of practices and dispositions that were predicated on this existence (e.g., state building programs, military expeditions, tax collection, gestures of allegiance, "legitimate" use of force). The complementary dynamic of asserting that, and acting as if, Moab existed generated Moabite state hegemony. Agents encountered these state effects historically and culturally, initially as something suddenly made relevant by the military successes of Mesha against Israel and subsequently as an inherited historical reality."[567]

The criticisms outlined above should not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the analytical strategy of trait identification must be thrown out, only that it should be deployed less dogmatically, being careful not to impose too rigidly a "foreign" state model that loses sight of the unique ways in which local cultural resources were deployed in historically specific contexts to express particular intellectual projects and products. Furthermore, while one must situate the process of Iron II state formation in each given territory within its broader Levantine context, it should not be assumed that each territory took form according to a single regional model. It is still helpful, however, to outline the material traces of administrative practices that are attested in these polities, as states can only be known as a "hegemonic effect" through "historically specific practices, which articulate specific cultural resources."[568] In the case of the Iron II Levantine states, one must make the proviso (as does Routledge regarding the case of Moab) that conclusions regarding the scale and interpretation of these administrative practices remain highly tentative.

There are a number of categories of evidence employed in the analysis of state formation by various administrative studies of the Cisjordan and Transjordan. The most

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[567] *Ibid*, 215-216.
[568] *Ibid*, 39.

frequently employed are the following: (1) settlement growth and patterns; (2) palaces or administrative buildings; (3) trade networks; (4) tax/tribute collection and delivery systems; (5) "frontier" policies marked by fortresses and fortifications; (6) "public works" projects, including water reservoirs and fortified gateways; (7) scribal schools and documentary practices; (8) the administrative functions attached to specific titles witnessed in biblical and epigraphic material and (9) a more developed material culture (relative to preceding/following periods).

What follows will be a brief survey of the development of Israel and the Transjordanian states (Ammon, Moab, and Edom) employing these categories as general guidelines. It will become apparent that these categories of evidence are not fully represented in any one state, with the exception of Israel. For the other three polities, tentative conclusions will be drawn about the relative extent of state development in each territory. In describing the various features of these small states, it is important to highlight the fact that the polities of the Transjordan in particular shared a broadly common culture, despite the establishment of distinct national monarchies over the course of the Iron II period. Moreover, their political boundaries, far from being stable, fluctuated in sync with the imbalance of resources and power.[569] Even the dialects of their scripts are not clearly to be distinguished from one another, particularly given the fact that so many inscriptions (allegedly) from Transjordan are unprovenanced.

State Formation: Israel

Israel's appearance as a polity in the historical record is first attested during the mid-ninth century in the inscription on a black obelisk of Shalmaneser III, in which Israel appears as a major regional power (along with Phoenicia and Aram-Damascus) in the coalition that confronted said king at the battle of Qarqar in 853 BCE.[570] The mention in

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[569] Each of these states occupied a region whose spatial boundaries have long been defined by biblical accounts; yet it is important to remember that these polities did not begin from a fixed locality or identity but were asserted in a space characterized by multiple competing claims.

[570] As indicated by the inscription of Shalmaneser III recounting his campaign in 853 BCE against the coalition of Syrian and Palestinian kingdoms, one of the other major regional powers appears to have been Aram-Damascus. Hadad-'idr of Aram Damascus is recorded as one of the three leaders of this defensive coalition (along with Ahab of Israel and Irhu-lena of Hamath). Shalmaneser's inscriptions describe three further campaigns to that region, but the coalition, led by Hadad-'Idr, kept the Assyrians out of central Syria on each occasion (Pitard 1994: 217-218). See also p. 195, n. 583, and pp. 198-199 below on Aram-Damascus as a regional competitor with Israel.

the mid-ninth century Mesha Inscription of Israel's defeat by Mesha likewise implies that
Israel constituted an already existing consolidated power by that period.[571] Israel (as well
as Aram-Damascus) was a regional power capable of imposing itself upon neighboring
polities and territories. As will be demonstrated below, the fact of Israel's power finds
collaboration in the archaeology of ninth and eighth century Samaria.

As was seen in the previous chapter, Israel's emergence as a state in the early Iron
II Age followed neither the dissolution of the legendary "United Monarchy" of the
biblical account, nor a lengthy period of complete collapse. Following a period of
disruption in the LB/Early Iron period, new Canaanite city-states arose to dominate the
rural territories around them (Tel Megiddo, Tel Rehov and Tel Kinneret in the Jordan
valley, and Tel Dor and possibly Tel Keisan on the coast.[572] Finkelstein has termed this
phenomenon (i.e. the Iron I reoccupation of many of the LB centers in the north) "New
Canaan," and he attributes its prosperity to "the stability of the rural sector" and to the
dynamic trade with Phoenicia, Cyprus, and elsewhere.[573]

In the highland region only, a major change occurred: the event of a strong wave
of settlement. For example, in the central hill country (the Land of Ephraim), settlement
rose dramatically in the Iron I period and peaked in the Iron II period; the population is
estimated to have risen to approximately 31,000 in the middle of the eighth century, from
9400 at the end of the eleventh century (and 3800 at the end of the twelfth century).[574]
Suddenly, however, the major centers of this "New Canaan" were destroyed in the late

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[571] Israel had apparently dominated the Mishor region from some point around 880 BCE until anywhere
between the last years of Ahab (ca. 855-853) and the earliest years of Jehu's dynasty (ca. 841-830 BCE).
[572] See Finkelstein 2003: 75-83. According to Finkelstein, only two major Late Bronze cities in the
lowlands – Hazor and Lachish – were utterly destroyed and replaced by nearby cities during this Iron I
period: Kinneret in the north and Ekron in the south.
[573] *Ibid*, 79.
[574]See the survey results for the central hill country (Land of Ephraim): Finkelstein 1988-1989: 151-154.
(Unfortunately, Finkelstein does not provide demographic estimates for the tenth and ninth centuries BCE.)
The total number of sites during the Iron II period was 190, in contrast with the preceding Middle Bronze
(85), Late Bronze (5), Iron I (115) and with the succeeding Persian (92). Furthermore, sixty-six percent of
the Iron I sites grew in size during the Iron II. The settlement and demographic peak during the Iron II
period was surpassed only in the Roman and Byzantine periods (p. 151 and fig. 13). For corresponding
settlement growth in the northern hill country (Manasseh) during the Iron I and II periods, see A. Zertal
2001: 38-64. Like Finkelstein does in Ephraim, Zertal records a peak of settlement during the Iron II
period in Manasseh (238 sites). Cf. Zertal 1993: 1311-1312 and Finkelstein 1993: 1313-1314.

tenth or early ninth centuries.[575] There are at least two possible scenarios for explaining the tenth-century destruction of these northern Canaanite centers. The expanding settlement of the highlands may have annihilated these cities, although it is doubtful that the early highland polity had the power to do so (and that it would have wanted to destroy its economic partner). According to a second and more likely scenario, it was the pharaoh Sheshonq I who struck the blow against the centers of "New Canaan" in the second half of the tenth century BCE.[576] Finkelstein argues that with the annihilation of the old system and the ensuing socio-political vacuum, the door was left open for the rulers of the northern hill country to extend their power into the lowlands and found a "large territorial, multi-ethnic state."[577]

This new polity, known as "Israel" in contemporary inscriptions, was a "multi-faceted" entity, consisting of "several different ecosystems and a very heterogeneous population."[578] According to Finkelstein's reconstruction of Israel's demographic makeup, the core of the state and the seat of its capital, Samaria, was inhabited by the "descendents of the second-millennium highlands population" (for Finkelstein, the "Israelites"), whereas the population of the northern lowlands was comprised primarily of "local indigenous elements," i.e. "Canaanites."[579] Contrary to the assumption of Finkelstein, these two groups were not necessarily ethnically distinct (i.e. "Israelite" versus "Canaanite"): the differences between the rural settlements in the northern valleys and those in the northern and central hill country as noted by A. Faust[580] can be attributed simply to a different economic and social development in these respective regions (due in a large part to their relative openness to outside influences, such as that of the Phoenicans on the coast). In the north-east region, bordering the territory of Aram-Damascus, a small number of Aramaic inscriptions found at many Iron II sites there indicate that part

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[575] Although the rural sector managed to avoid disruption; the archaeological data chronicles major destructions at all of the main centers. Finkelstein (2003) dates this destruction to the second half of the tenth century (pp. 78-79).

[576] Sheshonq's list mentions Rehov and Megiddo; a fragment of a stela of Sheshonq I was discovered at Megiddo.

[577] *Ibid*, 79. Cf. A. Faust 2000a: 2-27 and J. Holladay 1995: 380-382. Faust contrasts the heavy Phoenician orientation of the ruling classes with the more humdrum evidence of varied household architecture in the villages of the northern kingdom suggesting considerable ethnic diversity.

[578] Finkelstein 2000: 131.

[579] Finkelstein 2003: 80.

[580] See Faust's study (2000a: 2-27) of the rural sector in northern Israel during Iron Age II.

of the population was Aramean. Groups related to the Phoenician coastal cities dwelled in the highlands of Galilee and on the northern coastal plain.[581]

It is the heterogeneous character of Israel as a state that helps explain the particular ruling strategy devised by the first major highland dynasty, the Omrides. According to Finkelstein, the Omride dynasty modeled its "concept of a commanding stronghold for a limited ruling class that controlled large highland territories" after the Middle and Late Bronze elite strongholds at highlands sites such as Shechem and Shiloh.[582] It is no coincidence therefore that there is a strong resemblance between the major Israelite administrative centers in the valleys and the urban centers of the MB and LB Age city-states. Based as they were in the northern highlands, the Omrides needed to justify their territorial expansion into neighboring "foreign" lands and to secure the loyalty of these populations, both because of the economic incentives promised by expansion, and because of the similar ambitions of the neighboring emerging states in Aram-Damascus and Moab.[583] Finkelstein therefore sees the construction of fortified compounds with palatial quarters as fulfilling two functions: (1) as administrative centers to control the "foreign" areas of the newly established state, and (2) as Omride "propaganda" to serve the "legitimacy needs of a dynasty ruling from the highlands."[584]

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[581] It is difficult to ascertain whether a city along the northern coast, such as Dor, should be classified as Israelite or Phoenician. These sites doubtless contained inhabitants from both groups, and it is probably best not to classify them too rigidly as one or the other: they were cities in which both groups had an interest.

[582] Finkelstein 2003: 80.

[583] According to the Mesha Inscription (mid-ninth century BCE), the kingdom of Moab certainly had territorial ambitions. In the stele, Mesha describes how he captured the land of 'Ataroth from the king of Israel (line 10). The newly emerged Aramean kingdom of Damascus probably represented the greatest threat to Israel's hopes of expansion. As suggested by the finds from Hadar, Aram-Damascus held what is now the Golan, all the way up to the eastern coast of the Sea of Galilee (Herr 1997: 132). Several of the sites along the border between Israel and Aram-Damascus probably alternated between the control of these two states, including Tel Dan, 'En Gev III-II and Hadar I. Unfortunately, apart from external sources (the Assyrian inscriptions, Hebrew Bible), little historical information is available for Aram-Damascus. No documents from Aram Damascus itself have yet been discovered; the only known inscriptions were found at Til Barsip and Calah, and consist of two ivories with brief inscriptions of Hazael on their backs (Pitard 1994: 216-223).

[584] Finkelstein 2003: 81. According to Finkelstein, there is little to distinguish, either conceptually or architecturally, ninth-century Samaria from Labayu's Shechem. A. Faust (2000a: 2-27) has also highlighted the apparent social and ethnic differences between the villages and urban settlements of the northern valleys as indicative of a sort of competition between the new elite and the indigenous population of the northern valleys. Cf. the earlier work of H.G.M. Williamson (1996: 41-51) regarding Omride architecture as propaganda.

From the early ninth century BCE onward, therefore, the "public face of kingship" appears to have been strongly represented in the monumental architecture of Israel: the relevant strata – Building Periods I and 2 at Samaria,[585] the Jezreel compound,[586] Hazor X,[587] Megiddo VA-IVB[588] and Gezer VIII[589] – all exhibit elements

[585] That the first major building efforts at the site of Samaria (Building Period I) should be dated to the time of the Omrides is suggested by the reference to Israel in Assyrian texts as *Bīt Humri*. This designation very likely refers to the founder of Israel's capital (Finkelstein 2000: 115). Dating to the early Iron II period, Building Periods I and II represented the outcome of an intensive building project that demolished the remains of an earlier settlement (Building Period 0, dating to the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE; according to R. Tappy (2001), this was "a modest family estate that produced oil and wine" [p. 3]; cf. Tappy 1992: 96-101, 213 for pre-Omride occupation of the hill at Samaria; according to N. Franklin's more recent analysis of Samaria's building periods [2004: 189-202], Building Period 0 was "not a small family holding but rather a major commercial enterprise" [p. 194]; see below). By the time of Building Period II, Samaria featured a large palace compound built entirely of ashlar masonry, measuring 178 X 89 meters; this compound was surrounded by its own fortification wall (a combination casemate and solid wall) likewise constructed of impressive ashlar masonry. The compound also included open spaces, storehouses (in which the Samaria Ostraca were found), a large residence (palace), and a separate building in which excavators uncovered approximately 500 ivory fragments (Tappy 2001: 166-174; but see Tappy 2001: 491-495 for the dating and stratigraphic problems pertaining to these ivories, and n. 606 on p. 199 below). The Assyrian palace at Nimrud in Mesopotamia yielded similar ivories; these may have even come from Samaria (having been obtained by the Assyrians when they conquered the area). Seven proto-Ionic capitals were uncovered at Samaria; these may have graced a monumental entrance to the royal enclosure. Why did Omri choose the rocky hill-top site of Samaria to be his capital? N. Franklin has argued persuasively that the large number (ca. 100) of bottle-shaped cisterns on the summit and lower slope date to Building Period 0 and reveal the presence of a pre-Omride-era flourishing wine and oil industry. She has proposed that Omri chose Samaria primarily because of its financial potential (although he may have also viewed it as an ancestral domain), and that the site during Building Period I became "the hub of a highly specialized and lucrative oil and wine industry that flourished throughout southern Samaria, and must have been an important element in the state economy" (p. 201). (See D. Eitam 1987: 23-27 for the flourishing oil and wine industry in southern Samaria during the Iron II period.)

[586] The casemate enclosure at Jezreel appears to have been designed along the same lines as the palace compound at Samaria. The overall plan featured a surrounding casemate wall, towers at the corners, a sloping earthen rampart, and a massive moat outside the fortifications (D. Ussishkin and J. Woodhead 1994: 4). Ashlar masonry found in the tower may have been connected with the palace, which was probably located in the north-western sector of the compound (Finkelstein 2000: 117). Williamson (1996: 41-51), followed by N. Na'aman (1997: 122-128) and Finkelstein (2000: 116-117), have attributed the palace compound and other monumental elements at Jezreel to the Dynasty of Omri.

[587] Like Jezreel, Stratum X at Hazor also features a gate and casemate enclosure. Finkelstein (1996: 177-187; 1998: 167-174) has argued persuasively for an early ninth century date for this stratum, against the conclusion of Hazor's excavators Y. Yadin (1993: 594-603) and A. Ben-Tor (Ben-Tor and Ben-Ami 1998: 1-37) that it should be dated to the reign of Solomon during the tenth century BCE (their date is largely based on the biblical reference to the building activities of King Solomon in Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer).

[588] Finkelstein has dated Megiddo stratum VA-IVB, with its Palaces 1723 and 6000, to the early ninth century and the time of the Omrides (1996: 177-187; 1998: 167-174; 2000: 120-121). Although these palaces are similar to the other ninth century compounds at Samaria, Jezreel, and Hazor, the site "lacks the typical layout of a casemate compound which includes all or much of the tell" (2000: 120).

[589] If one follows Yadin's theory Solomonic architecture (based in turn on the references to Solomon's fortification projects in I Kgs (9:15), the four-entry gate, a section of a casemate wall, and a large building next to the gate and city wall should be dated to the tenth century (this date is followed by W. Dever 1993: 504-505 in his analysis of Gezer Stratum VIII). Finkelstein has downdated these structures to the early ninth century and attributes them to the building activities of the Omride dynasty (2000: 119-120).

of monumental architecture that Finkelstein attributes to the building efforts of the Omride dynasty.[590] In addition to sharing similar architectural concepts, all of these sites appear to have been royal and administrative centers rather than fully urbanized cities, as is apparent from the presence of public buildings with large open spaces but very little evidence of domestic quarters.[591] Larger cities in Israel do not appear to have developed until later in the eighth century, after the recovery of the region from the incursions of Aram-Damascus.[592] At that point, each of these royal cities featured new or altered layouts, as well as the addition of domestic residences.[593] Even in the eighth century, however, the provincial towns of this kingdom (such as Tel el-Farʻah [North]) lack the monumental architecture of the royal cities.

Over-all, the settlement pattern in the kingdom of Israel is characterized by a great deal of spatial hierarchy. Surrounding the royal centers of Samaria and Jezreel, and probably providing them with agricultural and human resources, were walled towns: dating to the eighth century BCE, these included Shechem IX-VII, Dothan, Farʻah (North) 2 in the highlands; Aphek X, Dor, Michal, and Zeror on the coast plain; Beth-Shean V Upper in the Jordan Valley; and Yokneʻam XIII-XII and Taanach in the Jezreel Valley. Small, unfortified towns and villages helped sustain these cities and wall towns.[594] Using the anthropological model termed "central-place theory," the Jokneam Regional Project in the Jezreel Valley has conducted a study of this economic system.

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[590] According to Finkelstein (2000: 121-122), the key characteristics of Omride architecture that can all be found to a greater or lesser degree at Samaria, Jezreel, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer are: (1) a podium, (2) a casemate compound, (3) a four-entry gate, (4) the orientation and layout of the compound, (5) a moat and glacis, and (6) a palace.

[591] Cf. the study of urban sites in ancient Israel by Z. Herzog, *Archaeology of the City: Urban Planning in Ancient Israel and Its Social Implications* (1997). On p. 234, he notes that the primary features of the cities of the northern kingdom (i.e. "Israel") were "monumental palaces, ceremonial buildings and administrative structures"; these buildings "occupied most of the internal space inside the cities, providing only limited space for residential quarters."

[592] See below, pp. 198-199.

[593] See Finkelstein 2000: 122. The relevant eighth century strata are Megiddo IVA, late Iron II Gezer, Hazor VI-V, and the expansion of Samaria into an upper and lower city. Jezreel was destroyed in the late ninth century, probably at the hands of Hazael of Aram-Damascus (N. Naʼaman 1997: 126); in the eighth and seventh centuries, the site of Jezreel became a small village, inhabited by a few families.

[594] L. Herr 1997: 135-136.

This project located one such regional economy centered on Yokne'am, around which orbited towns like Qashish III and villages like Qiri VI.[595]

The emergence of fortified towns in the hill-country and the erection of circular towers in the Jordan Valley reveal that the scions of this kingdom did not apparently confine their building efforts to constructing monumental palaces and administrative structures at a few select sites. In an article on the results of the Manasseh hill-country survey,[596] A. Zertal contends that the fortified towns in the hill country around Samaria dating to the Iron II period were "administrative and fortified 'castles' rather than dwelling-sites."[597] He argues that these fortified sites represent the efforts of the central government deliberately to settle the desert fringes and to fortify the roads and borders. Another aspect of this effort may have been the construction of circular towers sitting along three of the east-west roads crossing the Jordan Valley. These towers were probably designed to control the routes of access into the central highlands of Israel, and may have represented early warning stations for attack from the east by the Arameans (or even the Ammonites).[598]

It seems likely that the kingdom of Aram-Damascus, under King Hazael, conquered most of the north-eastern territories of Israel ca. 840 BCE.[599] Finkelstein attributes the construction of fortification and monumental elements at three northern sites – Hazor VIII, Dan IVA, and et-Tel (Bethsaida) on the north-eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee – to the expansion of Aram-Damascus under Hazael, and he dates these strata to the late ninth century BCE.[600] M. Kochavi points to major changes in material culture at three northern sites, Tel Hadar, 'En Gev, and Bethsaida, as indicative of continuing

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[595] A. Ben-Tor and Y. Portugali 1987. Herr (1997: 136) posits that another such regional economy, consisting of a central site with "easily accessible smaller sites surrounding it," may have been Beth-Shean with sites like Tel 'Amal and Rehob nearby.

[596] Zertal 2001: 38-64.

[597] *Ibid*, p. 60. The bulk of the population in the hill country, which grew dramatically during the ninth and particularly the eighth centuries, lived in farmsteads and villages.

[598] A. Zertal (1995: 253-273) has suggested that these towers be dated to the tenth and ninth centuries, but L. Herr (1997: 136) has argued that they make more geopolitical sense during the ninth century, "when Israel most likely heightened security along its eastern approaches."

[599] A. Fantalkin and I. Finkelstein 2006: 30-31; cf. N. Na'aman 1997: 122-128.

[600] Finkelstein 2000: 125.

Aramean control in the eighth century BCE over the "Land of Geshur" (the region east of the Sea of Galilee, in what today is the southern Golan).[601]

During the second half of the ninth century, the rule of the kings of Israel was restricted to the northern highlands. Around 800 BCE, Israel prospered and expanded territorially again as a client state of the Assyrian Empire. Fantalkin and Finkelstein suggest that Israel recovered its influence over the southern trade routes in the lowlands, an area that it had ostensibly controlled during the Omride Dynasty in the early ninth century BCE.[602] They point to several indications of "renewed involvement by Israel in the south, in territories that had previously been dominated by Hazael."[603] The construction of Beersheba V and Arad XI by the Judeans was probably accomplished under Omride auspices, reflecting Israel's efforts to gain control over trade routes in the Beersheba Valley. Israel's involvement in the south is also indicated by the "strong northern features in the material culture and inscriptions of Kuntillet 'Ajrud, located on one of the desert trade-routes" and the "possible association of [Israel] with transportation of Egyptian horses to Assyria."[604]

In their material culture, the elites of Israel reveal themselves to have been heavily oriented towards Phoenicia.[605] In fact, it may be more accurate to say that there would have been little to distinguish a coastal Phoenician from a typical representative of the ruling class in Israel. Phoenician-style masonry was used in the construction of the large palace at Samaria, and it was furnished with a sumptuous array of items, also in the Phoenician style (such as carved furniture inlays and decorative objects).[606] According to Joffe, the finds at the palace of Samaria "situate the occupants not simply within the

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[601] Kochavi 1994: 136-141.

[602] Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006: 28-33. Part of Israel's effort to exert its influence in the south in this earlier (early ninth century) period is referred to in the mid-ninth century Mesha Inscription, which makes mention of the construction of two Omride forts in Ataroth and Jahaz in northern Moab (lines 10-11, 18-19).

[603] *Ibid*, 32.

[604] *Ibid.*

[605] Cf. Dever 1995: 416-431, esp. pp. 421-425, and Joffe 2002: 448.

[606] A cache of ivories, unearthed in the northern area of the summit in the early 1930s, have since their discovery been linked to the period of King Ahab (late ninth century) based on the explicit reference in 1 Kgs 22:39 to the "ivory house" that Ahab had built. Tappy (2001: 491-495) has proven this identification to be problematic, given "the secondary nature and the late date of deposition for the ivory-bearing deposits in question." Based on a detailed reading of K. Kenyon's stratigraphic notes and summaries, Tappy concludes that the corpus of ivory fragments came from "multiple local layers diverse in character, quality, and date," and that most these contexts date to the Hellenistic and Roman periods (p. 492).

Levantine but a broader international sphere of political style."[607] The ceramic repertoire from Israel likewise included "Samaria Ware," thin, red-slipped and burnished bowls replicating Phoenician prototypes. Israel's "redundancy of palaces," its emphasis on conspicuous consumption and display, all support Finkelstein's hypothesis of a ruling strategy that was closely akin to that which predominated in the city-state organization of the region from the Middle Bronze through Iron I periods.

The restriction of luxury goods to elite contexts together with the elaborate palatial infrastructure in Israel likewise suggests that the primary goal of Israel's administration was focused on taxation rather than storage.[608] The implementation of a system of taxation, or of some kind of royal supply system, is suggested by the discovery of the early to mid-eighth century Samaria ostraca.[609] The eighty-one inscribed sherds were found in the storage rooms of the royal palace and record deliveries of commodities from rural locations to the royal center.[610] Brief texts such as these would normally have been thrown out after the information on them had been consolidated and recorded on a more formal medium (probably papyrus).[611] These ostraca therefore probably played a rather ordinary role in the day-to-day workings of the administration, and they were doubtless the work of an ordinary scribe and not a specialist.[612]

From within the capital come ninety-three texts, (of which the Samaria ostraca comprise eighty-one), including a small fragment of an eighth century limestone stele on which only three letters have survived, *'šr* ("which"/ "who").[613] Outside the capital, the

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[607] Joffe 2002: 448.

[608] Cf. Finkelstein 2000: 114-138; Herzog 1992: 234-249; and Joffe 2002: 451.

[609] These ostraca also attest to the existence of a developed wine and oil economy in Israel in the beginning of the eighth century BCE. Excavations and surveys in southern Israel have indicated the establishment of sites that specialized in oil production, with scores of oil presses, in the eighth century at the latest (D. Eitam 1987: 23-27).

[610] The ostraca can be divided into two groups: those belonging to the ninth and tenth regnal years, and those belonging to the fifteenth regnal year. See below (pp. 239-241) for a more lengthy discussion of these ostraca.

[611] Indeed, the find-spot of the ostraca indicates that they had been thrown out: all of the clusters of ostraca were found within a fill below the floor level of the so-called "Ostraca House" (I. Kaufman 1982: 229-239). The inscribed sherds had evidently been discarded long before the floor had been laid, and they were randomly distributed throughout the fill.

[612] A. Millard 1998: 33-39; cf. Millard 1995: 209.

[613] G. Davies 1991a, no. 3.312; Renz 1995: II: 135. This stela fragment was found in the debris at the northwest corner of the monumental gate, which has led to the conclusion that it was erected at or near the gateway. In the same area, a nine-line fragment of a Neo-Assyrian stele written in cuneiform was also discovered (D. Ussishkin 1989: 490). The excavations at Samaria did yield a large group of bullae, but only

only (provenanced) witnesses to writing are the cultic graffiti from late ninth/early eighth century Kuntillet 'Ajrud, a site situated in the desert of northern Sinai but linked to Israel,[614] as well as from a few sites in Israel proper where names and titles were scratched on pots in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Phoenician.[615] Apart from these inscriptions, two seals of royal officials in Israel are known: an unprovenanced seal made from brown carnelian and inscribed with the name of an official of the last king of Israel, Hoshea (*l'bdy 'bd hwš'*),[616] and an early eighth century jasper seal carved with a lion and the inscription of an official of King Jeroboam (*lšm' 'bd yrb'm*) that was found in excavations at Megiddo in 1904.[617]

In general, the attestations of writing from Israel proper are quite meager, and all date to a period of eighty years from the beginning of the eighth century until 720 BCE, when the kingdom of Israel was dissolved by the Assyrians.[618] On the one hand, this small corpus of inscriptions appears to reveal a very limited knowledge of writing in all areas except Samaria, the royal capital. On the other hand, the scarcity of inscriptions in the epigraphic record from Samaria does not necessarily equate with the absence of literate activity in the ancient historical reality of Samaria. There are viable alternative explanations for this anomaly, including environmental factors and repeated destruction and rebuilding. Many more documents were doubtless rendered on papyrus, as was probably the case in Phoenicia (see Chapter 3). Indeed, excavators found clear evidence for texts written on papyrus at Samaria, consisting of the fifty or more clay bullae which

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fifteen survived the exposure; the rest crumbled into dust when unearthed. All of these fifteen showed common Egypto-Phoenician motifs, but none bore any script whatsoever (N. Avigad 1997: 33).

[614] Z. Meshel, *A religious centre from the time of the Judean monarchy on the border of Sinai* (1978). The influence of the northern kingdom on Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman) is indisputable, as is the strong connection between Israel and Phoenicia evident from the finds at the site. The site has yielded a great quantity of "Samaria Ware" pottery, artifacts with drawings characterized by a marked Syro-Phoenician influence, several inscriptions in Phoenician. Moreover, the cultic graffiti feature linguistic elements that occur frequently in inscriptions from Israel, as well as the phrase "Yahweh of Samaria" (A. Soumeka 2002: 94).

[615] These traces of writing have been found in houses at Hazor (Renz 1995: I: 124-127) and during a surface survey in the "Manasseh" region (Renz 1995: I: 199).

[616] This seal, from the private collection of Shlomo Moussaieff, was published by A. Lemaire 1995: 48-52. The inscription can be translated: "Belonging to Abdi servant of Hoshea."

[617] Davies 1991a, no. 100.068. The inscription can be translated: "Belonging to Shema servant of Yaroboam."

[618] J. Naveh 1998: 91.

secured these texts; these fragmentary bullae bear seal impressions on one side (a few with Hebrew inscriptions), and papyrus fiber marks on the other side.[619]

Given the evidence dating to the tenth through eighth centuries for writing in Phoenicia proper and among the Aramean and Transjordanian kingdoms (e.g., Zakkur Stela, Amman Citadel Inscription, Mesha Inscription, Tel Dan Inscription), similar literate productions are to be expected in a royal town like Samaria in the eighth century BCE. There is therefore every likelihood that Israel, which meets all of the categories of evidence for state formation (as listed above on pp. 191-192), also possessed a cadre of scribal specialists both to compose monumental inscriptions asserting that a totality (i.e. the state of Israel) existed, and to engage in "a series of practices and dispositions that were predicated on this existence"[620] (e.g., the administering and recording of the affairs of the state). This scribal community helped generate Israel's state hegemony by both asserting that and acting as if it existed.

For the approximately 150 years of Israel's existence as a state, until its destruction at the hands of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III in 723/722 BCE, Israel remained a dominant player in the southern Levant and quite probably the conduit through which many elite concepts (including those associated with literate productions) were transmitted to the rest of the region through trade, territorial expansion, and diplomatic domination.[621] Moreover, it is probable that Israel's scribal community comprised a percentage of the refugees who fled to Judah following the Assyrian destruction of Samaria; in this way, Judah (and particularly the scribal community in Jerusalem) became the direct recipient of the pan-Canaanite writing tradition, as both developed and transmitted by the Samarian scribal corps (for more on this event, see Chapter 5).

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[619] J.W. Crowfoot, G.W. Crowfoot, K.M. Kenyon, *et al.* 1957: 2, 85, 88, 89; nos. 29-41.

[620] Routledge 2004: 215-216.

[621] It was undoubtedly the Assyrian invasion and deportations that brought an end to Hebrew writing in the north of Palestine. A number of sites in the region that was formerly the kingdom of Israel feature Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions dating to the late eighth and seventh centuries. Among these are a monumental inscription found in the town of Samaria (the capital of the Assyrian province), two inscribed cuneiform stelae unearthed on the western slopes of the Samaria Hills, and a number of seals belonging to Assyrian officials and discovered in many of the major centers of the Assyrian provinces in Palestine: Tel Keisan, Beth-Shean, Megiddo, Dor, Samaria, Shechem, Gezer, etc. (E. Stern 2001: 14-17). The deportees transferred from Babylonian cities to Palestine also apparently used cuneiform writing for their official documents, as attested by the cuneiform tablets discovered at sites along the Via Maris and in the Assyrian province of Samerina (see N. Na'aman and R. Zadok 2000: 159-188).

State Formation: Israel versus the Transjordan

In general, the polities of Transjordan do not appear to have been as centralized or as prosperous as their neighbor Israel to the north-west. This disparity is apparent in the relative size of settlements in Israel and the Transjordan. While all the territories of Ammon, Moab, and even Edom experienced settlement growth over the course of the Iron II period (ninth-sixth centuries), very few of the Iron Age II sites excavated in the Transjordan can be classified as large sites.[622] Among these are Dhiban in the territory of Moab (3 hectares) and Tel Jawa in the territory of Ammon (2 ha).[623] Conversely, Israel featured several sites that generally can be considered to be first-rank administrative centers: Megiddo (5.3 ha), Hazor (12.0 ha), Gezer (13.3 ha), Dan (20.2 ha),[624] and Shechem (6.0+ ha),[625] as well as sites that can be classified as large: Beth-shean (4 ha), Dothan (4 ha), Tel el-Far'ah (N) (5+ ha), Tel Yokne'am (4 ha).[626] Of course site size cannot be used alone as a criterion for identifying small urban centers, as P.M. Daviau has pointed out in her discussion of urban settlement in the Cisjordan and Transjordan; the construction of fortifications, houses and public buildings also provides evidence for planning.[627]

While the territories of Moab and Ammon have yielded examples of royal inscriptions, nothing like the Samaria ostraca, a clear testimony to the implementation of

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[622] This classification of site size is based on Finkelstein's categorization of Iron II sites in the northern hill country (Ephraim) (1988-1989: 146). He characterized Iron Age II sites as large sites (20+ dunams = 2.0 ha), medium sites (more than 10 dunams = 1.0 + ha), small sites (3-9 dunams = 0.3-0.9 ha), and single structures that covered only 1-2 dunams (1988-1989: 152). This classification was applied by P.M. Daviau (1997: 156-171) to the Cisjordan and Transjordan in a brief discussion of relative site size, and within the larger context of her analysis of urbanism at Tel Jawa, in Ammon. This site classification contrasts with Baumgarten's classification of Late Bronze Age sites in the Levant (1992: 143-150), where a site of 1.5-5.0 ha was considered a small town and a site of 5.0-10.0 ha was considered a medium town. Only sites that extended beyond 10.0 ha were considered cities. The classification of urban sites in the Iron Age Levant is in even more dramatic contrast with those of Mesopotamia, where a site must be 10 ha or more and must function as a central place in an urban landscape to even be classified as urban (H. Kühne 1994: 55-84).

[623] For site size at Dhiban, see F. Winnett and W. Reed 1964: 5; for site size at Jawa, see P.M. Daviau 1997: 159.

[624] These sites have been classified as first-rank administrative centers by Z. Herzog in his study of settlement in the Iron Age (1992: 231-274). To this grouping can be added Shechem (J.P. Olivier 1983: 117-132).

[625] The importance of Shechem, a site in the northern hill country, appears to be related to its identity as "the hub of an extensive road network that flourished in central Samaria during the Iron Age" (D. Dorsey 1987: 57).

[626] The southern Samarian hills alone featured fifteen large sites and fifteen medium-sized sites (Finkelstein 1993: 1313). For site size at Beth-shean, see A. Mazar 1993: 214; at Dothan, see D. Ussishkin 1993: 372; at Tel el-Far'ah (N), see A. Chambon 1984: pl. 4, and at Tel Yokne'am, see A. Ben-Tor 1992: 805.

[627] Daviau 1997: 159.

a royal supply (or perhaps taxation) system has been found in the Transjordan. Furthermore, neither the architecture nor the material culture of these states east of the Jordan ever reached the levels of sophistication achieved in Israel. Nevertheless, for each of the Transjordanian polities of the Iron Age, "buildings larger than ten times the area of a typical domestic dwelling have been discovered at sites arguably to be identified as capitals, or at least royal/administrative centers."[628] Routledge has observed that the layout of the ninth century BCE Dhiban Area L building[629] (Moab) "shows parallels to the dense clusters of peripheral rooms" dating to the ninth-eighth centuries and found at Lachish (Phase C) and Samaria (Israel), and that the "palatial" buildings in Busayra (Edom) and 'Amman (Ammon) share several features with the architecture of Assyrian-style palaces (such as Megiddo building 1039 in Israel).[630] He suggests that "these major building projects were planned and executed with an awareness of what had been done, and what was being done, in neighboring polities."[631]

　　This awareness and imitation extended also into the realm of luxury goods and architectural elements. Proto-Ionic capitals, executed in a typical Phoenician style, were found in a monumental building in the capital of Ammon, 'Amman, and at two Moabite sites (el-Mudeibia[632] and Kerak[633]). Also at the site of the palace at 'Amman (but found incorporated into later constructions) were discovered four limestone double-faced Hathor heads; these may have served as the window balustrades of the palace and are reminiscent of the "woman in the window" motif tradition well known among the Phoenician-Samarian ivories.[634] The ruling classes in both Ammon and Moab showed themselves eager to adopt and display a certain Phoenician-Samarian aesthetic – an aesthetic that conveyed a sense of kingly things, and of power, borrowed as it was from

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[628] Routledge 2004: 172-173.

[629] Because Routledge is responsible for publishing the results of William Morton's excavations at Dhiban in the 1950s and 1960s, he is able to provide new information from the Iron II period at the site, especially pertaining to what he thinks may be a significant portion of the palace of Mesha.

[630] *Ibid*, 172.

[631] *Ibid*, 173.

[632] I. Negueruela 1982: 395-401. The proto-Ionic capitals from el-Mudeibia were unearthed in the remains of a large fortress that was built in the eighth century.

[633] In the mid-1908s, a proto-Ionic capital was spotted in a restaurant wall at a spring immediately below Kerak (E. Knauf 1985: 429-430).

[634] Although the pieces of proto-Ionic capitals and the Hathor heads were found at the site of the seventh century Assyrian-style palatial building (Area A; Stratum 7) in 'Amman, they are believed to have belonged to an eighth century, pre-Assyrian Ammonite royal palace (E. Stern 2001:245-246). The Assyrian palace that replaced it had its own distinctive ornamentation.

the dominant power in the southern Levant, Israel.[635] With Israel's fall in the last quarter of the eighth century, there was a noticeable shift on the part of these Transjordanian elite towards the imitation of Assyrian style. Styles of architecture and material culture became more oriented towards the east, as both the southern and northern Levantine region came under Assyria's sway.[636]

State Formation: Ammon

The region east of the Jordan River, south of the Jabbok River (Wadi Zarka), and north of the Heshbon River appears to have become organized over the course of the Iron II period into a small state with its major capital city ('Amman) surrounded by scattered towns, fortresses, and rural farmsteads. The prosperity of the central site of 'Amman (located in modern-day Amman) is suggested by the discovery of collections of material including fine pottery and a proto-Ionic capital, and of fragments of city fortifications and building walls.[637] "Palatial" buildings have been partially excavated in seventh-century contexts on the third terrace of the 'Amman Citadel.[638] Smaller towns encircled 'Amman, including Tel Safut to the north, Tel Jawa, Tel Sahab and Tel el-'Umeiri to the south, and the Jordan Valley sites to the west (including Tel es-Sa'idiyeh, Tel Deir 'Alla, Tel Mazar, and Tel Nimrin).[639] In the hinterland, small village and agricultural sites had cropped up by the seventh century BCE, such as the dozens of farmsteads in the highlands around 'Amman (Rujm Salim, the two Khirbat al-Hajjars, etc.).[640] Some of

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[635] Some of this influence may have also come from Aram-Damascus during the brief period of Aramean domination prior to Assyria's extension of its power in the region by the late eighth century. Under Radyan (Rezin in the biblical account), Aram-Damascus experienced a renewed political influence beginning about the middle of the eighth century. Radyann even formed a new anti-Assyrian coalition of Syro-Palestinian states, including Ashkelon, Israel, and the Phoenician city-state of Tyre (see Pitard 1994: 222).

[636] See the discussion of a growing Assyrian influence on architecture, burial customs, iconography, and ceramic styles in E. Stern's (2001) chapters on the Transjordanian kingdoms during the Neo-Assyrian period: Ammon (pp. 236-258), Moab (pp. 259-267), and Edom (pp. 268-294).

[637] Unfortunately, the Iron Age remains at 'Amman have not yet received the attention of a major multi-season excavation.

[638] One of these palatial structures, possibly the palace of the Ammonite kings, or at least a major administrative building, was found on the 'Amman Citadel in the east-central part of the site by a French-Jordanian team (F. Zayadine, J.-B. Humbert, and M. Najjar 1989: 362). A palatial interpretation is supported by the richness and international flair of the finds: a clay mask, Phoenician ivories, a green glass goblet, lapis lazuli fragments, and perhaps four double-faced Hathor heads (Herr 1999: 223).

[639] See Herr 1999: 222; cf. Stern 2001: 244-247. The Jordan Valley is quite long, and may have been associated with several geopolitical entities over the course of the Iron Age (Herr and Najjar 2001: 334).

[640] R. Younker 1991: 335-341.

these smaller sites were situated in strategic locations and were not associated with agricultural installations; these structures, which could be either round towers with other associated buildings or rectangular fortified structures, were probably fortresses.[641]

At least two of the smaller sites along the southern border of Ammon, Tel Jawa and Tel el-'Umeiri, have been identified as Ammonite administrative centers by their excavators.[642] P.M. Daviau has argued that Tel Jawa shows clear signs of having been constructed "at a strategic location according to a pre-conceived plan with government assistance."[643] Unfortunately, archaeologists do not yet possess a clear picture of an urban plan in ancient Ammon, as no Ammonite site has been excavated extensively enough. Tel el-'Umeiri has been excavated perhaps the most thoroughly of all, but since it was not a normal residential site it may not be of much use in reconstructing the street plans of Ammonite sites[644]; furthermore, it was founded quite late – somewhere near the middle of the sixth century. Both Tel Jawa and Tel el-'Umeiri did yield evidence of fortification systems: parts of casemate walls were uncovered at 'Umeiri, and a fifty meter area was unearthed at Jawa that featured walls, towers, and buttresses.[645]

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[641] These probable fortress sites include Rujm al-Henu, Drayjat, Rujm al-Malfuf (N), Rujm al-Malfuf (S), one of the Khirbat al-Hajjars, and Khirbat al-Hari. See Kletter 1991: 33-50; cf. Herr 1999: 222; Najjar 1999: 103-106. More than 150 buildings have been identified as "Ammonite" monumental structures, but there is still no general agreement as to their number or their date. Thirty-five of them are circular buildings and 122 are fortress-type structures. Only a little over six per cent of these structures have been partially or fully excavated (Najjar 1999: 103). While these megalithic structures built around 'Amman were initially thought to be fortresses protecting the Ammonite capital, many scholars now believe them to have been multipurpose structures, *viz.* both agricultural and military installations. Najjar believes that their purpose evolved over time; initial towers were built as military installations, but with the establishment of the *pax Assyriaca* (leading to more stability in the region), "non-military buildings were added and the character of not only the original buildings but the character of the whole settlement changed as well" (p. 105).

[642] Tel Jawa: Daviau 1997: 156-171; Tel el-'Umeiri: Herr 1999: 228-232. Based on the biblical account, scholars have long thought that these two sites (as well as Heshbon and Jalul) fell within the territory of Moab; but the discovery of Ammonite material culture at all four of these sites has led to the consensus that they represented the southern border of Ammon (Herr and Najjar 2001: 225).

[643] Daviau 1997: 168. Among the features of Tel Jawa that suggest to Daviau that it functioned as an important administrative center are (1) the casemate wall and gate complex, built as free-standing structures before the construction of housing in the town; (2) the construction of a variety of types of buildings within the settlement, and (3) the presence of several large orthogonal buildings with two stories containing evidence of administrative and economic activities (such as seals and an ostracon).

[644] The site consists primarily of administrative buildings in the southwestern quarter, and "domestic structures housing the bureaucrats to the north and east" (Herr 1999: 223). Remains of residential buildings are relatively scarce in Ammon. Tel es-Sa'idiyeh has yielded part of a residential quarter, and a house has been excavated at Sahab (Stern 2001: 247).

[645] Najjar 1999: 109.

Major trade routes ran through Ammon: a north-south road traditionally called the "King's Highway," and at least two other roads crossing the Jordan Valley from 'Amman to Jerusalem and the Samaria region. The lists of goods in the Heshbon ostraca testify to trade on the King's Highway (several of the ostraca found in the fill of Heshbon 16 reservoir represent receipts of trade items); trade with Phoenicia is illustrated by the Assyrian, Judean, and Phoenician vessels found in the tombs at Tel Mazar in the Jordan Valley, and by the Phoenician pottery from tombs in 'Amman on the plateau.[646] It is not clear how active a role the Ammonite administration took in controlling this trade. The overwhelmingly administrative character of the contents of the ostraca from Heshbon,[647] Tel el-'Umeiri,[648] and Tel Mazar,[649] suggests some kind of administrative role in trade and/or royal supply systems;[650] these ostraca consist of lists of personal names of people who sent or received goods, as well as quantities.

In Ammon has also been discovered a surprising quantity of seals and seal impressions, the vast majority of which date to a period spanning the late eighth through early sixth centuries BCE. Ammonite seals form the second-largest group after the Hebrew seals.[651] About seventy inscribed seals and bullae are almost certainly Ammonite (of these, only nine had a known find spot).[652] Several of these seals bear titles similar to those appearing on the seals of royal officials from other kingdoms in the southern Levant (such as *'bd*, "servant"; *spr*, "scribe"; and *n'r*, "steward").

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[646] Herr 1999: 225.

[647] The new enumeration for these ostraca has been laid out recently by F.M. Cross (forthcoming: 70-94): A1 (Ammonite 1) = *CAI* 80; A2 = *CAI* 94; A3 = *CAI* 137; A4 = *CAI* 76; A5 = *CAI* 65. Cross has argued that these ostraca, found in the Heshbon 16 reservoir, were written in the Ammonite dialect and should be dated to the late seventh and sixth centuries BCE (*ibid*; cf. Cross 1975: 1-20). Tel Heshbon is situated in a region along Ammon's southern border that traditionally belonged to Moab, but which in the seventh century BCE was apparently annexed to Ammon (see n. 642 above). The identification of these ostraca as Ammonite is generally accepted among scholars (with the exception of U. Hübner, whose argument for the Moabite character of these ostraca is based on analysis of biblical references to Heshbon as situated in Moab; see Hübner 1994: 82-87). A few graffiti also come from this site, including one bearing the name Natan-'el ([*n*]*tn'l*) (A7 = *CAI* 81) and dated by Cross to the seventh century BCE (forthcoming: 92).

[648] Herr 1992: 187-200.

[649] *CAI* 144-147. W. Aufrecht has dated these ostraca to the sixth and fifth centuries BCE.

[650] Ostracon A1 from Heshbon, for example, has been interpreted as "the record kept by a royal steward of the assignment or distribution from the royal stores of foodstuffs—beef and mutton, grain and wine—as well as money and spices, to the personal household of the king, to courtiers, and to others to whom the crown is under obligation" (Cross forthcoming: 75). The king is the first person named as a recipient.

[651] N. Avigad 1997: 320

[652] S. Parker 2002: 54.

A seal impression with an Ammonite inscription (dated on the basis of its script to ca. 600 BCE), discovered in 1984 at Tel el-'Umeiri, refers to the official of an Ammonite king: "Belonging to Milkom-'ur, servant of Ba'al-yasha'" (*lmlkm'r 'bd b'lysh'*) (the identification of Ba'al-yasha' with the Ammonite king is supported by the iconography of the seal, which includes a four-winged scarab, frequently used as a royal motif in the Cisjordanian kingdoms Israel and Judah).[653] This seal impression joins five inscribed seals that were found in the earth layers around the administrative buildings at 'Umeiri, as well as at other areas of the site. While these five seals do not exhibit titles (names plus patronymics), their presence at what was apparently a major administrative center and the discovery there of another seventy or so uninscribed seals and seal impressions (most belonging to the mid-sixth century phase of occupation) suggests that they were the seals of administrators.[654]

Ammonite material culture reached its zenith during the ninth-sixth centuries, as evidenced by the findings of numerous tomb deposits. Much of this material culture exhibits Egyptian influence, e.g. Egyptian *atef* style of crown depicted on the limestone busts found in the capital 'Ammon as well as on the figurine fragment of the head of a male found during the 1989 season of the Madaba Plains Project at Tel Jawa (South); the five anthropomorphic (or anthropoid) coffins, similar to the Philistine coffins from western Palestine, found in an Iron Age tomb on the grounds of the Raghdan Royal Palace.[655] Three royal inscriptions on stone and one on a bronze bottle, utilizing the contemporary lapidary Aramaic script, attest to scribal activity of a literary quality.[656]

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[653] Younker 1985: 173-180 and 1994: 313.

[654] Herr (1999) suggests that the 'Umeiri administrative center was built by the Ammonite monarchy to administer government-sponsored grape plantations at the farmsteads to produce wine to pay for tribute to Babylon after the Babylonian victory over Ammon in 582 BCE; the seals therefore may represent "the officials or farmers selling or returning their production to the crown as taxes (p. 232). For the (primarily unprovenanced) seals of other Ammonite officials, see Avigad 1997: 321-325.

[655] These Philistine and Transjordanian versions of anthropomorphic coffins are much more crudely rendered than those used for the burial of royal and noble Egyptian mummies (see Younker 1994: 308-310).

[656] For more on the Ammonite royal inscriptions, see below, pp. 235-238. There is one other inscription of note engraved on metal and found in (southwest) 'Amman: a bronze bowl or cup found in an Iron II tomb at Khirbat Umm Udhayna bears two names (of the owner?) engraved on it. The inscription has been dated to the sixth century (F. Israel 1997: 106).

State Formation: Moab

The most logical geographical borders for the territory of Moab are the Dead Sea on the west, the desert on the east, the Wadi Hasa (biblical Zered) on the south, and perhaps the Wadi Wala (a tributary of the Mujib) on the north.[657] Settlement in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE was concentrated on the western side of the plateau; the eastern margins saw the (re)founding of a few sites, presaging the changes that would occur in that region during the following period (ca. 700-550 BCE).[658] Surveys of the central core of Moab (the Kerak plateau) and particularly of the dry margins that surround each side of the Kerak plateau reveal a dramatic expansion in the extent and density of human settlement in the region during Iron Age II, peaking in the late seventh through mid-sixth centuries.[659]

Over the course of the late ninth and eighth centuries BCE, a number of regional centers grew considerably, including Dhiban, Baluʻa, Madaba.[660] Routledge argues that this increased spatial hierarchy is connected to the development of a state political hierarchy, and that there was a connection established between the new urban centers of this hierarchy and the social groups at the top levels of state authority. He points to evidence for architectural differentiation at such sites as Dhiban and Baluʻa,[661] and to the discovery of the word *mlk* ("king") on Iron II inscriptions at Dhiban (Mesha Inscription)

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[657] Herr 1997: 150.

[658] Routledge 2004: 191-192.

[659] Routledge 1997: 132.

[660] Thanks to an expansion to the southeast by about three quarters of a hectare, the mound of Dhiban reached around three hectares in size (Routledge 2004: 191-192). Baluʻa nearly doubled in size, reaching nearly ten hectares in area (U. Worsech 1995: 145-149). The entire sixteen hectares of the tell at Madaba may have been occupied by the eighth century BCE, as first indicated by the 1993 surface survey (T. Harrison, *et al*. 2000: 211-249). Recent excavations in Field B at the site have substantiated the results of this survey, suggesting the presence of a "flourishing settlement" during the ninth through early seventh century BCE and revealing the presence of a monumental town fortification wall built during the Iron II period (see D. Foran and T. Harrison 2004: 79-96). The excavators suggest that the Iron Age remains at Madaba were "part of an ambitious building program inaugurated by Mesha in the latter part of the ninth century BC" (p. 82).

[661] At Dhiban, a major public building (Area L) was discovered on the summit of the site that may have been built in the ninth century BCE (Mesha's Palace?); this Area L building exhibits parallels to the dense clusters of rooms found at ninth-eighth century Lachish and Samaria (Routledge: 2004: 161-168); excavations at Dhiban have yielded parts of city walls that are dated to the seventh century (Stern 2001: 262). In Moab's southern region, Baluʻa appears to have received a new quarter enclosed within a casemate wall during the seventh century (*ibid*). Parts of a large public building were excavated at Baluʻa, that produced pottery from Iron IIB and C (Worsech 1989: 111-121).

and al-Kerak (al-Karak fragment);[662] these inscriptions suggest a relationship between "Moabite royalty and the apex of spatial hierarchy in Moab."[663]

Regarding their site size and distribution, however, Routledge points out that regional centers such as Dhiban, Madaba, Jalul, Balu'a, and perhaps also al-Karak and ar-Rabba, "are not clearly integrated into a single regional system of exchange and central administration."[664] The settlement data instead suggests a small constellation of local centers, surrounded in their immediate area by little communities. It has been suggested that Dhiban constituted something of a national "center" for Moab, yet this seems doubtful in terms of population, production, or distribution; instead, it appears to have constituted a "regal-ritual" center.[665] This is only a problem if one rigidly insists on viewing the state as a central agency dominating all social life. There is no difficulty, however, if one follows Routledge's notion of state hegemony, which postulates that the state entrained different spheres of social activity without having to possess direct oversight over those spheres. Dhiban can therefore be seen as occupying an important "central position in an ideologically defined spatial hierarchy" in line with state interests, but not necessarily directly operated by the state.[666]

A relationship between Moabite royalty and settlement development is likewise suggested by the construction of fortified gateways and frontier fortifications during the Iron II period. Multi-chambered gates with piers in particular are architectural expressions of kingship that are quite specific to these Iron Age polities.[667] On the northeastern border of Moab, a "six-chambered" gateway was found at Khirbat el-Mudayna ath-Thamad and dated by its excavators to around the first half of the eighth century BCE.[668] This site also featured a casemate wall connected with the six-

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[662] Winnett and Reed 1964: 1-9.

[663] Routledge 1997: 137. This relationship is also suggested by the ceramic industry associated with the remains at Madaba: this industry "reflects close cultural ties with sites to the west and south of Mādabā historically attributed to the Moabite realm," including Khirbat al-Mukhayyat (ancient Nebo), Ma'in (ancient Ba'al Ma'on), Khirbat 'Ataruz (ancient 'Ataroth), Libb (ancient Bamoth?), Khirbat al-Mudayna (ancient Jahaz?), and Dhiban (ancient Dhiban) (Foran and Harrison 2004: 82).

[664] Routledge 2004: 192.

[665] *Ibid.* Routledge notes that "much of the mound at Dhiban (Dibon) appears to have been taken up by so-called public buildings" (p. 192).

[666] *Ibid.*

[667] Routledge 2004: 176.

[668] Daviau and Dion 1996: 5-6. The gateway had a length of 13.7 meters, somewhat smaller than the Iron II examples found in cities west of the Jordan.

chambered gate, as well as a lower wall or rampart encircling the site partway down the slope. A four-chambered gateway was partially uncovered at el-Mudeibia that contained four or more large volute (proto-Ionic) capitals.[669] Surrounded by a huge fortification wall, this large fortress is located about 20 km southeast of al-Karak and its construction has been dated to the first half of the eighth century.[670] Herr and Najjar speculate that the el-Mudeibia fortress was intended to guard approaches to the al-Karak region through the Fajj, a natural roadway connecting the King's Highway with the Desert Highway to the east.[671]

The fortress at el-Mudeibia comprises the southernmost of a series of possible forts that were founded within the territory of Moab, particularly along its eastern margins.[672] These supposed forts all feature massively built "towers" spanning between four and twenty meters on a side. The interpretation of these "towers" is rendered difficult by their post-Iron Age occupation and by the fact that they are found in three different kinds of sites.[673] A number of surveys of the eastern edge of the Karak plateau have provided the best information regarding these sites. It has been found that the majority of these sites (seventy-four percent) consist of isolated structures (particularly towers), rectangular enclosures, or some combination of the two.[674]

Survey work done south of Amman on the physical location of the "tower" sites suggests they may have had primarily agricultural uses: they tend to be situated on hillsides, rather than hilltops, overlooking arable wadis; this type of location seems better suited for agricultural activities than for strategic ones.[675] An agricultural interpretation does not fit all of the tower sites on the eastern Karak Plateau, however; few agricultural installations have been discovered at the tower sites on the plateau and steppe, and these sites are located on high ground with a good range of visibility. Routledge suggests that at the end of the ninth century and throughout the eighth century, possible forts and

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[669] J. Drinkard 1997: 249-250.
[670] G. Mattingly, *et al*. 1999: 127-144.
[671] Herr and Najjar 2001: 338.
[672] For a comprehensive analysis of these forts, see Routledge 2004: 192-201.
[673] The different kinds of sites include (1) forts forming a single architectural unit with an encircling enclosure, usually rectangular and fortified, (2) settlements containing a grouping of houses and other architectural elements, and (3) isolated structures (towers, small enclosures, single buildings).
[674] *Ibid*, 195.
[675] L. Geraty, *et al*. 1989: 195-196.

"small nucleated settlements" were established in the region along the eastern margins that had been abandoned at the end of the Iron I period. The seventh century saw the construction of a number of isolated structures unevenly distributed between these forts and nucleated settlements. He associates this type of settlement expansion with attempts to lay claim to and pacify the eastern zone (and connects this with the Neo-Assyrian account of a Moabite campaign conducted in the steppe east of Moab against Qedarite nomads).[676]

Epigraphically, the administrative apparatus of the Moabite state is not very well attested. With the exception of the two Moabite stelae of Mesha and Kemoshyat, no significant epigraphic material has been discovered in Moab.[677] A small group of seals has been identified as Moabite,[678] but only one of these has been found in excavations.[679] Much of the evidence for personal titles from Moab, including those of officials,[680] are unprovenanced and attributed to Moab on the basis of personal names containing the theophoric element "Kemosh," the morphology of the letters used, and the iconography that sometimes accompanies inscriptions on seals and seal impressions. Even the "*marzeah* papyrus," an interesting example of a royally sanctioned legal document ostensibly from Moab, is of unknown provenance, purchased as it was on the antiquities market. This papyrus, dated by its publishers to the late seventh or early sixth century BCE, was sealed with a bulla bearing the title "The king of *eqt*[]." According to the publishers, *eqt* is likely the name of a town preserved in that of present-day Tel Iqtanu,

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[676] Routledge 2004: 200.

[677] Recently a new inscription identified as Moabite has come to light, but unfortunately its provenance is unknown. Published by S. Ahituv (2003:3-10), who dates it to the "middle or later half" of the eighth century (p. 4), the inscription consists of seven lines, none of which are complete. The text that can be read in lines 2-5 is similar to character to the Mesha Inscription: it appears to reference the making of a reservoir (*mkrt*) by Ammonite prisoners (*b'sry bny'mn*), just as the MI makes mention of similar work by Israelite prisoners (J.A. Emerton 2005: 293-303).

[678] In Avigad's corpus of West Semitic stamp seals, the number of seals classified as Moabite (42) and Edomite (10) is significantly lower than the number classified as Hebrew (most of which are from Judah: 399 seals, 262 bullae and 50 jar-handle impressions), Ammonite (149), and Aramaic (107) (Avigad 1997: 548).

[679] Unfortunately, the only excavated Moabite seal comes from outside the historically attested territory of Moab: from a tomb containing eighth-fifth century BCE material at Umm Udaynah, northwest of Amman (M. Abu-Taleb 1985: 21-29). The seal reads *plty bn m'š hmzkr*, to be translated: "Palty son of Ma'aš the memorist/herald."

[680] For examples of stamp seals bearing personal titles and ascribed to Moab, see Avigad 1997: 372-374. Among these seals are several belonging to Moabite scribes, e.g. *kmš'm bn kmšl hspr* ("Kemosh'am son of Kemoshel the scribe") and *'ms hspr* ("Amos the scribe") (F. Israel 1987: 101-138, nos. 3 and 5).

located in central Moab.[681] The contents of the document concern a structure and its contents, which include millstones and *marzeah*.

State Formation: Edom

The heartland of Edom was situated on a narrow strip of cultivable land (but suitable only for dry farming) in the highlands north of the Wadi Hismeh, which stretches to the Red Sea and Arabia, south of the Wadi el-Hesa, east of the Wadi 'Arabah, and west of the Syrian desert. Much of the rugged, mountainous region of the heartland area reaches over 1500 meters in altitude. Edomite sedentarism was doubtless inhibited in earlier periods of the Iron Age by the inhospitable climatic conditions of the semi-desert outside of this strip (particularly to the south and east). The evidence from the four sites (Buseirah, Tawilan, Umm el-Biyara, Ghrareh) thus far excavated in the Edomite hill country reveals Edomite settlement primarily during the seventh and sixth centuries BCE (perhaps extending slightly into the eighth and fifth centuries)[682] – dates that are at least a century later than the beginning of Iron II settlement in Ammon and Moab.

The *only* one of these settlements that could safely be categorized as a "center" rather than a "village" or "hamlet" during the peak of Iron Age occupation in Edom (the seventh and sixth centuries) is the capital of Buseirah (situated twenty-two km south of Tafila, four km west of the King's Highway).[683] Dominated by two or three large buildings and fortified by a town wall, Buseirah appears to have been a substantial administrative center.[684] Much of this site (forty percent) is comprised of the temples/palaces of the acropolis (Area A; Area C may also have contained a public building, perhaps a palace) and the rest by ordinary domestic buildings (Areas B and D).[685] Excavations at Busierah yielded a small number of inscriptions on ostraca, seals,

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[681] P. Bordreuil and D. Pardee 1990: 1-10.

[682] S. Hart 1992: 93-98; cf. P. Bienkowksi 1995: 41-92. The Edom Survey Project, undertaken in the region between Tafila in the north and Ras en-Naqb in the south, has not yielded any significant Iron Age material predating the eighth century BCE (Hart 1992: 94-96; cf. Hart 1987a: 287-290 and 1987b: 33-47).

[683] According to Hart's rather vague site classification, a "hamlet" is a "small cluster of buildings" and a "village" is "a large, unfortified group of buildings." "Small fortresses" are "single structures, usually in the order of 20-25 metres square," and "large fortresses" are "buildings or settlements within a strong enclosure wall" (1987a: 287).

[684] C. Bennett 1983: 9-17; cf. Bienkowski 1990a: 101-103.

[685] The stone and earth platforms on which the two phases of the Area A "temple" and the Area C "palace" were built (Integrated Stages 2-3) resemble the podium supporting the palace-forts and residency at

weights, and seal impressions on pottery, all dating to the late eighth/early seventh century.[686] P. Bienkowski has noted that Buseirah's "architecture and town plan are quite unique in Edom," as most of the other Iron Age settlements in Edom consisted of open villages and farms.[687]

Even the other principal settlements of the Edomite heartland (that have been excavated) are only modestly sized. Situated near Petra, in the hills to the north above Ain Musa, is the unfortified and essentially agricultural town of Tawilan, whose primary phase of architectural development was during the eighth and seventh centuries.[688] Umm el-Biyara is a small, unwalled settlement with primarily domestic occupation on the mountain of Umm el-Biyara overlooking the Petra basin.[689] The skeletal remains at Ghrareh, situated on a hill at the head of the Wadi Delaghah, the southernmost access route to the plateau from the west, only permit the excavator to conclude that the site was a fortified farmstead, and that its principal dates of occupation are the late Iron Age (seventh-sixth centuries BCE).[690] Outside of the Edomite hill country, the site of Tel el-Kheleifeh,[691] on the Gulf of Aqaba, has also produced Edomite material and may have been under Edomite control for part of its occupational history.[692]

The Edom Survey Project, undertaken in the region between Tafila in the north and Ras en-Naqb in the south, found both a "significant" number of unfortified villages, as well as a high number of fortresses and watchtowers along all access routes.[693] Based

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Lachish; furthermore, the plan of these buildings can be compared to the so-called "open-court" buildings in Palestine, such as those at Megiddo, Hazor, Lachish, and Ayyelet ha-Shahar (Bienkowski 2002: 478-479).

[686] Bennett 1983: 9-17; cf. Bienkowski 1992: 101-2 and 1990a: 101-103; Millard 2002: 429-439.

[687] Bienkowski 2002: 479.

[688] Bennett 1984: 1-23; cf. Bienkowski 1990a: 95101 and K. Hoglund 1994: 339.

[689] Bienkowski 1990a: 91-95 and 1992: 99. According to Bienkowski's summary of Bennett's excavations at Umm el-Biyara, the principal occupation of this one-period site occurred during the first half of the seventh century BCE (1990a: 92).

[690] Hart 1987a: 290 and 1987b: 35.

[691] The site was excavated by Glueck between 1938 and 1940. G. Pratico's reappraisal of Glueck's excavations (1985: 1-32) has proposed two major occupational phases, dating from the eighth through the sixth centuries: a casemate fortress with a six-roomed building in the center, and a fortified settlement in an insets/offsets design with a four-chambered gate.

[692] Hart 1992: 93-94. The function and origins of Kheleifeh remains uncertain (see Bienkowski 1995: 56-57). According to Hart, "the earliest fortress [on the site] may relate more to Negevite types" (p. 94). According to Bienkowski (2002), the unique mixture of Negev Ware, 'Edomite,' 'Midianite,' Greek, Arabian, and Egyptian pottery "strongly suggests that its role was connected with the Arabian trade, as a gateway town on the Red Sea coast trade route" (p. 480; cf. Bienkowski 1995: 57).

[693] Hart 1987a: 287-290, especially Figure 1, p. 288.

on the results of this survey, S. Hart has perpetuated N. Glueck's influential theory that there was a long line of fortresses protecting the eastern desert flank of the region during the Iron II period.[694] The incentive for this type of defensive settlement, and indeed for settlement at all in this inhospitable region, has been attributed by Hart to the Assyrians and their efforts to protect a long border with the desert during the seventh century.[695] But this evidence for a string of border forts has been questioned;[696] thus far none of the so-called "forts" in Edom has been excavated, and without excavation, it cannot be confirmed that these sites were even fortified during the Iron Age. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that these "forts" may have had a variety of functions, as agricultural installations or settlements.

In general, settlement in Edom appears to have been comprised predominantly of unwalled villages and farms, whose character was largely agricultural and domestic. Some are located on fairly inaccessible mountain tops; this seclusion from any centralized control from the capital, Buseirah may have been deliberate.[697] E.A. Knauf has speculated that each of the mountain strongholds in the Petra region consisted of the "citadel" of an individual clan or tribe; he interprets the contrast between these sites and Buseirah as indicative of an opposition between the "state" and the tribes.[698] All of the settlement evidence from the lowlands and highlands, both from excavations and surveys, indicates that centralized control was weak in Edom: as observed recently by T. Levy and M. Najjar, there is little indication in Iron Age Edom of the presence of either "two class-endogamous strata and a government that was both highly centralized and internally

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[694] Hart (1986) does acknowledge, however, that it is impossible to be completely sure of the pattern of Iron Age settlement due to the extensive character of later Nabatean settlement (p. 51).

[695] The question of how directly involved the Assyrians were in the organization of a defensive plan against the desert tribes in Edom is a matter of some debate. S. Gitin (1997), for example, argues that the Assyrians actually built Buseirah, Umm el-Biyara, and Kheleifeh in Edom as fortified settlements "to sustain and protect the north-south trade route" (p. 81). Thus far, there is little settlement that is notably Assyrian in character, with the possible exception of buildings A and B excavated at Buseirah. In their plan and their situation on a raised artificial citadel, these two buildings resemble the so-called Assyrian "open-court" buildings in Palestine and the Neo-Assyrian palaces in Mesopotamia. Since this type of building has a relatively broad distribution in the Levant (Tel Halaf, Zinjirli and Til Barsip in north Syria; Lachish and Megiddo in Palestine), it cannot be concluded that their construction was influenced by Assyria (although they are unique for Edom). Bienkowski (1995) argues that there is "little evidence of direct Assyrian involvement in Edomite affairs and no evidence of Assyrian forts and garrisons throughout Edom" (p. 62); cf. Herr 1997: 174, who supports this assessment.

[696] See Bienkowski 1995: 54-6 and R. Dornemann 1983: 123-4.

[697] Bienkowski 1995: 56.

[698] Knauf in M. Lindner, *et al*. 1996: 162.

specialized with the ability to wage war, exact tribute, control information, draft soldiers and regulate manpower and labour."[699]

P. Bienkowski and E. van der Steen have suggested that this situation reflects the "essentially tribal and kin-based, partially range-tied and nomadic and partially land-tied and settled" social organization of the groups in Edom during the Iron II period.[700] They point to the great variety in ceramic assemblages at the various sites in southern Jordan and the Negev as evidence for the continual movement of tribal groups and their interaction with groups from Arabia, the Negev, and the west, especially from the Beer-sheba Valley. While Judah may have claimed control over the Beer-sheba Valley and parts of the Negev during the Iron II period, these groups acted independently of Judah, and they controlled and sometimes raided the trade routes between Arabia, Edom, the Beer-sheba Valley, and Gaza.[701]

As many experts have pointed out, Edom's identity as an independent kingdom with an administrative center at Buseirah during such a short period of time (ca. 700-650 BCE) particularly seems derived from its expanding role in the inter-regional economic system as both a source of raw goods (the copper mines in the Wadi Feinan, south of the Dead Sea),[702] and as the site of new trade routes from the Arabian Peninsula, which were likely centered on aromatics.[703] The fact that the Edomite highlands (along with the southern coastal plains through the Beer-sheba-Arad basin) experienced an

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[699] Levy and Najjar 2006: 11.
[700] Bienkowski and van der Steen 2001: 40. Buseirah itself, far from being a national "capital" in the sense of being "the hub of a nationwide monolithic administrative network," can be interpreted instead as "a tribal centre which became the base of the supra-tribal authority ("king"), which interfaced with the imperial powers of Assyria, Babylon and Persia, and whose power was based on certain resources." Although the tribes in southern Edom appear to have recognized Buseirah's supra-tribal authority for a time, they retained their own power bases (Bienkowski 2002: 480). Based on their excavations at Khirbet en-Nahas in southern Jordan, which suggest that complex copper mining and processing occurred as early as the 12-tenth centuries BCE, Levy and Najjar (2006) have argued lately that "local control of lowland Edom copper production at the beginning of the Iron Age (along with trade) probably provided the main catalyst for the emergence of the Edomite 'super chieftains'" (p. 13). See below (pp. 219-222) for a discussion of the tribal kingdom model and its application to the Iron Age Transjordanian states.
[701] Bienkowski and van der Steen 2001: 21-47. Cf. Bienkowski and Sedman 2001: 310-325. This type of reconstruction better explains the complexity of the late Iron II ceramic assemblages in southern Jordan and the Negev than do the traditional reconstructions that interpret the complex mixture at many sites of different "cultural" traditions as evidence of Edomite incursions into Judaean-controlled territory, or as specifically "Edomite" or "Judaean" assemblages (for more on this question, see the discussion on the cult site at Horvat Qitmit in Chapter 5).
[702] See Knauf 1995: 113 and Hart 1992: 96.
[703] See Singer-Avitz 1999: 3-74; Bienkowski 2002: 480; Bienkowski and van der Steen 2001: 36-37.

unprecedented population increase in the seventh century has been attributed to the increasing Assyrian involvement in the Arabian trade routes and their diversion of the main trade route to Edom and southern Judah (as well as to Assyrian interest in Edom's copper). The Edomite highlands, so arid and inhospitable for sedentary occupation, flourished in the seventh century therefore thanks to the stimulus provided by the Arabian trade (i.e. the gathering in of trade revenues).[704]

The inscriptional evidence for administrative activity from Edom is quite unimpressive. There are a few fragmentary inscriptions comprised of parts of a few lines, all of which date to the seventh and sixth centuries BCE (no earlier ones are known); some later inscriptional material comes from Tel el-Kheleifeh and Tawilan.[705] From the north extremity of Edom comes a list of names from Tel el-Kheleifeh (no. 6043),[706] and from the eastern Negev comes a brief letter on an ostracon from Horvat ʿUza;[707] these are the most notable of the Edomite inscriptions. Of inscribed seals and bullae, only a handful comes from Edom (i.e. they are from an excavation in Edom and/or contain the divine name Qaus). A clay impression of a royal seal was uncovered in a room at Umm el-Biyara: this is the only example of a king's seal from Iron Age Jordan and it has been restored to read *qws g[br]/mlk ʾ[dm]*, "Qaus-Gabr, King of Edom.[708] The site of

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[704] Cf. Finkelstein 1992: 156-170; Hart 1986: 51-58; Bartlett 1989: Chapter 7, "The Kingdom of Edom." Edom was also strategically important to the Assyrians as a buffer zone against hostile desert tribes. The threat of the Arab tribes in the Transjordan is reflected in the Prism A of the "annals" of Assurbanipal, wherein the Assyrian pursued the attackers throughout the Transjordan and apparently entered Edom (see Millard 1992: 36).

[705] The most notable of these is the cuneiform tablet appearing to be a contract of sale drawn up at Harran in the accession year of Darius (possibly Darius I, 521-486 BCE). The tablet was found in the accumulation deposit following the end of Edomite occupation and was published by S. Dalley (1984: 19-21) in an appendix to C. Bennett's report on Tawilan. Bartlett (1989: 225-227) has highlighted two important ramifications of the discovery of this unbaked clay tablet at Tawilan: (1) the fact that an Edomite (Qusu-šamaʾ), presumably from Tawilan, apparently transacted business in Harran, almost 1000 km away; and (2) "that he found it important to carry the docket back to Tawilan, where conceivably there were others beside himself who might be able to read this document in Babylonian cuneiform" (p. 226).

[706] Bartlett 1989: 219-220. This list of names, typically understood as a receipt, comes from Edomite-Assyrian Stratum IV. The ostracon has been identified as Edomite primarily on the basis of the component Qaus in three of the names, and on the basis of the script (although it is acknowledged that the script is influenced by Aramaic forms). D. Vanderhooft (1995) notes that the majority of inscriptions excavated at Tel el-Kheleifeh, most containing lists of names or commodities and dating to the seventh century and later, are Aramaic or Phoenician (p. 143).

[707] Bartlett 1989: 221-222. V. Sasson (2005: 601-615) has recently identified this supposed "letter" as a type of poetic wisdom text with parallels to the book of Job. For more on this text and on the disputed nature of the site at which it was found, see the following chapter (Ch. 5).

[708] Bartlett 1989: 213. Now see also the seal inscribed *lqws gbr/[mlk ʾd]m*, "Belonging to Qaus-Gabr, King of Edom," found in the Babylon excavations, in the east front of a temple (Avigad 1997: 387-8, no. 1048).

Buseirah yielded a seventh century seal impression bearing the name of a royal official, *mlklb'* (*lmlkl/b''bd/hmlk*) ("Belonging to Mlklb', servant of the king").[709] The other primary testimony to the activity of royal officials in Edom is the seal impression "belonging to Qs'nl, servant of the king" (*lqws 'nl/'bd hmlk*) appearing on a variety of pottery forms found in a storehouse at Tel el-Kheleifeh (late seventh/early sixth century).[710]

Apart from these few seals bearing the names of kings and royal officials, there is very little evidence for social stratification from Edom proper. Edomite material culture is "overwhelmingly agricultural and domestic," and much of it is "fairly crude and utilitarian."[711] Few luxury items have been found; the discovery of a hoard of gold jewelry in an accumulation level at Tawilan following the end of Edomite occupation cannot be associated conclusively with any occupation at Tawilan, as it has been dated to the tenth-ninth centuries (before the site of Tawilan existed). Over-all, the epigraphic and material-cultural data supports the conclusion based on settlement data that Edom was a highly decentralized polity.

While Edom as a state may have been quite decentralized, the Edomite kingdom nevertheless made its presence felt as a historical entity on the international scene, as demonstrated by the mention of Edom in Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian inscriptions dating from the early eighth century down through the mid-sixth century BCE.[712] As has been shown by the previous survey of the archaeological data from the Edomite region, however, this assertion of its existence as a state does not appear to have become much of a reality on the ground until a later period (ca. 700-650 BCE).

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[709] Bartlett 1989: 212. Apart from this seal impression, the excavations at Buseirah yielded only a few other inscriptions, including a seal with three letters (a name?), four ostraca, and some instances of graffiti. The only graffito of interest is a five-letter inscription (…]*rk/qws*) found on the body of a bowl that could be interpreted as part of a prayer …*b*]*rk/qws*, "may Qaus be blessed," or as an address to Qaus, the *k* being the second person singular suffix, "…you, O Qaus" (Millard 2002: 429-439).
[710] Bartlett 1989: 214. The remaining Edomite epigraphic material pertains to weights, measures, and the contents of jars (see Bartlett 1989: 210; 227-228).   These brief inscriptions reveal that the inhabitants of Edom were familiar with the terms for weights and measures that were known as well in Judah.
[711] Bienkowski 1995: 59. Even excavations at the capital Buseirah did not yield a large number of luxury or high status objects, although the small finds hint at Buseirah's participation in a "wide-reaching trade" and at the possible presence of workshops at Buseirah (Sedman 2002: 353-428).
[712] See M. Weippert (1987: 97-101) for a survey of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts referring to the Transjordanian states; and see below, n. 736, for examples of such texts.

State Formation in the Transjordan: The Tribal State Model

The current non-evolutionary approach to Transjordanian Iron Age state formation prevalent among archaeologists develops the idea of unilineal descent systems, or "tribalism" as the underlying form of political cohesion.[713] This notion of "tribalism" is conceived as a structural constant related to the largely unchanging set of environmental conditions that prevailed in the highlands of Jordan.[714] The tribal state model helps explain both the form and formation of Iron Age Ammon, Moab, and Edom, as it allows for the changes in scale (rather than kind) that seem well accounted for by the empirical evidence.[715] At one end of the continuum are the basic tribal units based on kin relations; at the other end are the supra-tribal confederacies of the Iron Age states of Transjordan.[716] These confederacies are seen as "clusters of tribes united under the idiom of kingship in opposition to external threat and under the leadership of a king who is little more than an elevated kin-group leader."[717] According to Ø. LaBianca, the pronounced division of society into two realms—urban elite and rural tribesmen—that occurred in Egyptian and Mesopotamian societies did not arise to any great extent in the Iron Age kingdoms of the southern Levant. If a nascent form of such dimorphic social structures occurred, it would have been in certain major urban centers, and most likely it would have been in the Cisjordan (particularly Israel), where "predation on rural tribesmen by

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[713] See Ø. LaBianca 1999: 19-29; Younker 1999: 189-218; LaBianca and Younker 1995: 399-415; Bienkowski and van der Steen 2001: 21-47; Knauf 1995: 93-117 and 1992: 47-54. LaBianca and Younker (1995) describe their notion of "tribalism" as "strong in-group loyalty based on variously fluid notions of common unilineal descent" (p. 403).

[714] The flexible suprafamily descent systems facilitated the fluid movement of the population of highland Jordan along a continuum between sedentary-nomadic and agricultural-pastoral modes of existence. The type of social relations present in these kinship systems enabled productive strategies to remain flexible in a marginal environment that was far from stable.

[715] The tribal state model also provides an explanation for the "social organizational revolution that reversed the historical trend in Canaan dating back to the Early Bronze wherein city-states represented the apex of social evolutionary complexity—an apex that dominated the small rural kinship groups. Instead of a reemergence of Canaan's old urban order, the "kin-based elements" evolved into "a new level of social organizational complexity" that came to dominate the landscape (Younker 1999: 208-9).

[716] The notion present within the tribal state model of development along a segmentary continuum also helps account in particular for the rather extreme decentralization of Edom in the far south of Jordan. This is explained by LaBianca (1999: 22) as a result of the destabilizing cycles of sedentarization and nomadization, which became more pronounced as one moved southward from Ammon, to Moab, to Edom. Bienkowski and van der Steen (2001) see evidence for this kind of kin-based social organization in the complex mélange of different "cultural" traditions at many sites in the southern Jordan and the Negev. They conclude that Edom never achieved the status of a "monolithic nation-state," but instead consisted of independent tribal networks linked by kinship ties which were bound together by "bonds of cooperation and allegiance to a supratribal monarchy" (p. 40).

[717] Routledge 2004: 115; cf. LaBianca 1999: 21.

urban elites could be done with less risk of resistance … due to its [the Cisjordan's] more favorable agricultural conditions."[718]

The tribal state model gives a reason for the absence in these Transjordanian states of a number of essential features which typify "true" states as commonly defined by anthropologists. These features include a complex level of social organization, a pronounced settlement hierarchy, a significant amount of social differentiation, and a considerable amount of the population settled in urban centers.[719] The model also helps account for the peculiar configuration of settlements in these Transjordanian states: the presence of fortified sites on the territorial outskirts of these states, and the apparently heterarchical character of their major Iron Age centers. The fortified towns in the hinterlands are explained as centers of administration for the tribal territories; each "town," usually located on the top of a hill of some sort and consisting of a cluster of administrative buildings surrounded by walls and/or ramparts and entered by gates, possessed a cadre of bureaucrats charged with administering the economic affairs of the surrounding hinterland tribes. The heterarchical nature of the major centers of these states explains how power relations seem to have been "counterpoised" rather than "ranked within some scalar hierarchy" (in contrast with the "scalar hierarchy" of the "hydraulic" societies of Egypt and Mesopotamia). As attested in the archaeological record for each kingdom, there could be several political centers of gravity with each center "basing its power on a different political resource."[720]

As observed by Routledge, this model is not without its problems.[721] One difficulty is its assumption that the tribal state lies latent in the genealogies of tribalism, i.e. that it is one particular expression of a presumed unitary identity of the various tribes

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[718] LaBianca 1999: 21.
[719] See LaBianca and Younker 1995: 409.
[720] LaBianca 1999: 22. For example, the Edomite "state" appears to have consisted of tribal centers whose power depended on the control of different resources. For Buseirah, the source of its political power and influence appears to have been its "control of copper production, control of the Arabian trade to the Negev and Gaza, and control of contacts with the Mesopotamian powers." Other sites in Edom relied on their rich arable lands (the sites in the Petra region) or on a combination of agropastoral resources and their participation in wider trade networks to the north and south (Tawilan and Ghrareh); Umm al-Biyara and as-Sadeh can be seen as regional control centers, perhaps of local tribes; Kheleifeh's unique mixed ceramic assemblage may reflect a role as "an independent political centre within a hetrarchical state of Edom" whose power stemmed from its role as a gateway town on the Red Sea coast at a key point on the trade route between Arabia, Buseirah and Gaza (Bienkowski 2002: 481). See also the discussion of Dhiban in Moab (pp. 209-210 above).
[721] See Routledge's critique of the tribal state model in 2004: 114-132.

("Ammonite," "Moabite," "Edomite"). This supposition points to the greater problem of one regional model being imposed on the development of three different polities. Routledge cogently observes that "tribalism" must not be treated as a stable category, disregarding "the complexity and historical contingency of apparently tribal social forms."[722] The notion of "tribes" as a timeless form cannot "generate state hegemony in their own image monolithically, noncontingently, and outside of the articulation of specific cultural resources in specific hegemonic projects."[723] Rather than defining these "secondary states" solely as the products of external stimuli (unchanging environmental conditions), therefore, their construction as particular hegemonic systems within a discrete period of history should be examined.

For example, LaBianca's assumption that the Transjordanian kingdoms did not feature dimorphic social structures (i.e. the division of society into an urban elite and rural tribesmen) seems based more on ethnographic studies of twentieth-century tribes than on the archaeological and epigraphic data from these regions. He does not take into account the epigraphic data witnessing to the presence of a class of social elite who considered themselves participants in the administration of a polity (as shown by their personal seals with official titles) or as rulers of a kingdom (as demonstrated both by their seals as well as by Assyrian inscriptions referring to tribute rendered by the kings of Ammon, Moab, and Edom). The products of the scribal class include monumental inscriptions from Moab and Ammon implying an assertion of state hegemony in each region. Moreover, the archaeological record for each region indicates the existence of significant urban centers (some of which had fortifications) populated by communities of officials and scribes. While it is important to keep these critiques of the tribal state model in mind, this model nevertheless provides a useful way of accounting for the particular shape of the Transjordanian Iron Age states; i.e., why these states seem more characterized by a "thin veneer of central administration"[724] overlaying a foundation of

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[722] *Ibid*, 123.
[723] *Ibid*, 132.
[724] Knauf 1992: 52.

kin-based relations rather than by a highly centralized, hierarchical, and bureaucratic entity.[725]

The Impact of the Neo-Assyrian Empire on State Formation in the Southern Levant

While state formation in each sub-region of the southern Levant was propelled by its own internal stimuli, the external stimulus represented by the continual and intensifying encroachments of the powerful Neo-Assyrian Empire over the course of the Iron II period cannot be discounted. As Routledge remarks: "The local political context [of each state] was embedded in a regional one of competing polities that was in turn embedded in the global context of an expanding Neo-Assyrian empire."[726] In other words, the state formation of Israel, Judah, Ammon, Moab and Edom (as well as of Phoenicia and Aram-Damascus) was intertwined with regional and global as well as local contexts, and these contexts were perpetually shifting. Following Routledge, it seems plausible therefore "to see militarization and state formation occurring across the Levant in the late tenth and ninth centuries B.C.E. as a chain reaction to the beginning of regular military expeditions into Syria by the emergent Neo-Assyrian Empire."[727]

The beginning of the end for the local powers dominating trade and politics in the southern Levant during the first half of the ninth century, namely Hamath, Aram-Damascus, and Israel, came with the first campaigns into southern Syria of Shalmaneser III of Assyria between 853 BCE and 838 BCE. On the one hand, these six campaigns signaled the initiation of the western expansion of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, a process of consolidation and incorporation that was to continue until the end of Assurbanipal's reign (ca. 631 BCE). On the other hand, these campaigns also drove the western kingdoms, led by Hamath, Aram-Damascus, and Israel, to form a successful coalition against

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[725] The important role of genealogies in the formation of social and political identities in the Iron Age Levant can also be cited in favor of the tribal state model. For example, biblical, Neo-Assyrian and indigenous texts (see for example *CAI* 78 in Aufrecht 1989) repeatedly refer to Ammon as "the Sons of Ammon" (*benay-'ammon*), which can be interpreted as a genealogical appellation. Patrlineal descent as a complementary form of self-identification is well represented in the epigraphic record from the Iron Age Levant, most commonly in the formula "X son of Y (male name)" (or less frequently "X daughter of Y [male name]").
[726] Routledge 2004: 184.
[727] *Ibid*, 6.

Shalmaneser[728] that must have required a huge drive towards militarization and a significant mobilization of resources in each of these states.

Nevertheless, over the course of the ninth century, Assyria inexorably began to transform the north Syrian polities from individual political entities into provinces of the "Land of Assur." Furthermore, by the eighth and particularly the seventh centuries, the Assyrians had inaugurated an aggressive policy of economic exploitation in the southern Levant.[729] This Assyrian policy had a dramatically negative impact on the kingdom of Israel:[730] following the conquest of Tiglath-pileser III in 733/732 BCE, much of Israel's population (particularly that of the Lower Galilee) was either deported or fled to the neighboring kingdom of Judah in the south.[731]

The western Negev in particular came to be the major objective of Assyrian military campaigns: the Assyrians turned it into a buffer zone between Assyria and Egypt, and furnished it with military garrisons. As the western terminus for the trade in spices and other luxury goods, the western Negev also became a focal point for Assyria's economic activities in the Levant region.[732] Finkelstein has argued persuasively that the Assyrian policy in southern Palestine changed in the beginning of the seventh century BCE, from one of indirect control over the outlets of the desert routes in the southern

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[728] See p. 192 and n. 570 above.

[729] Gitin 1997: 77-103; H. Tadmor 1975: 36-48. S. Parpola (2003) proposes that it was Tiglath-pileser III, the despoiler of Israel, who introduced in 745 BCE a "strategy of systematic economic, cultural, and ethnic integration" in the west (p. 100).

[730] Between the time of Israel's membership in the coalition up until the campaign of Tiglath-pileser III, Israel appears to have accepted (more or less willingly) Assyria's suzerainty. Shalmaneser's Annals from his twentieth year record a delivery of tribute from Jehu, "son of Omri," and Assyrian records from the time of Adad-nirari III mention the tribute of Joash of Israel (Tadmor 1975: 40).

[731] Both Assyrian and biblical sources refer to the deportation of people from Upper and, in particular, Lower Galilee following Tiglath-pileser's campaigns of 733/32. According to surveys, in the eighth century the Lower Galilee had an estimated population of 17,600 prior to the Assyrian invasion; the region was almost totally deserted in the seventh century (Z. Gal 1988-1989: 56-64). Excavations conducted at Hazor, Chinnereth (Tel el-'Oreimeh), and Marom (Tel Qarnei Hittin) in the area of Galilee reveal large-scale destruction in the late eighth century BCE and a long period of desolation. The Assyrians built residences in their new province of "Samerīna" at the provincial capital (Megiddo), at Ayyelet ha-Shahar (near Tel Hazor), and at Chinnereth (Tel el-'Oreimeh). They also settled deportees in their new province, as is indicated by the contents of two cuneiform documents found during excavations of Gezer and dated to 651 and 649 BCE. More than half of the names in these documents are Babylonian (N. Na'aman 2005: 230-231).

[732] E. Oren 1993: 102-105.

coastal plain (through agreements with leaders of the Arab groups) to one of direct control over the city-states of Philistia (following the Assyrian campaigns to Philistia).[733]

This shift in Assyrian policy doubtless had an effect on the social and political life of the Transjordanian kingdoms. There is evidence that Assyrian interest in maintaining control over the Arabian trade and stability in the desert margins both spurred Edomite state formation by directing important trade routes through the region,[734] and may have encouraged Moab to expand settlement into the eastern transitional zone from plateau to steppe. A Neo-Assyrian account of a Moabite campaign against Qedarite nomads, evidently waged in the steppe east of Moab, apparently reflects the concern of Moab in pacifying and then laying claim to that eastern zone.[735] Assyrian imperialism also may have facilitated the formation of a military infrastructure in these states: for example, it is likely that among the duties entailed by the client-patron relationship established between the Transjordanian states and Assyria was the provisioning of troops for Assyrian military operations.[736]

Based on recent scholarship contending that significant social changes took place in Judah in the wake of the Judean resistance to Assyria,[737] Routledge suggests that specific historical conditions of Neo-Assyrian imperialism likewise occasioned shifts in

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[733] Finkelstein 1995: 147-149. Cf. Oren 1993: 102-105. The archaeological evidence for this second phase of Assyrian involvement in the south, and for the thriving southern trade, is extensive. Direct Assyrian intervention is indicated by the manifold examples of Assyrian public architecture found in the western Negev and southern Philistia.

[734] See above, pp. 216-217.

[735] Routledge 2004: 200 and 204. This Moabite campaign should be seen within the broader context of Assurbanipal's campaigns against the Qedarite Arab leaders Yauta and Ammuladi, as expressed in various prism accounts. By defeating the Qedarite leader Ammuladi and delivering him to Asurbanipal in Nineveh (as reported in Cylinder B), Kamashaltu King of Moab must have accomplished quite a service for the Assyrian monarch (R. Borger 1996: BVIII43, pp. 115, 244).

[736] S. Parpola and K. Watanabe 1988: xxxviii. In terms of the relationship between Neo-Assyria and the Transjordanian states, Neo-Assyrian inscriptions mentioning Moab and Ammon suggest that both states consistently rendered tribute to Assyria and largely remained docile client states. For example, in a clay tablet from the year 728 BCE, Tiglath-pileser III mentions the kings Shanib of Beth-Ammon and Shalaman of Moab, along with Qaus-malak of Edom, as having rendered tribute (Tadmor 1995: 170-171; for further examples of Neo-Assyrian texts referring to the Transjordanian states and to Israel, see Weippert 1987: 97-105). The Edomites largely appear to have realized the wisdom of loyalty to Assyria, although some scholars have speculated that they collaborated with the rebellion of Yamani of Ashdod (although they are not mentioned in the Assyrian sources as specifically having done so). Adad-nirari III (810-783 BCE) was the first Assyrian king to claim to have forced Edom into vassalage (Tadmor 1973: 148). Qaus-malak of Edom is listed in the Building Inscription of Tiglath-pileser III (744-727 BCE) as having rendered tribute to Assyria (J. Pritchard 1969: 282). Later lists show the Edomite king rendering his submission and tribute, e.g. Nimrud Letter XVI of Sargon (ca. 712 BCE; H. Saggs 1955: 134-135) and the Assurbanipal Cylinder C (ca. 646 BCE; J. Pritchard 1969: 298).

[737] Cf. Finkelstein and Silberman 2006: 259-285; Halpern 1991: 11-107 and 1996: 291-338.

the forms taken by social life in the Transjordan from the late eighth century to the dissolution of Iron Age statehood in the sixth century. He agrees with the picture (drawn by B. Halpern in particular) of "how pervasive and profound social change might follow on state mediation between global and local contexts."[738] Routledge argues for the emergence of distinct elite identities, at least partially separate from the networks of kin and locality, and associated with the military infrastructure of the state as well as with the trade activities enabled and encouraged by Assyrian interest in controlling the access points to the main trade routes.[739] The formation of landowning and administrative classes existing at least partially outside of the "secure social space" of kin and locality networks can likewise be connected with the archaeological evidence for a widespread intensification of agropastoral production (particularly viticulture) from the late eighth through early sixth centuries BCE. Such an intensification very likely led to "land consolidation and the disenfranchisement of subsistence farmers in the face of intensified 'cash crop' (olive oil and wine) production for export."[740] The conditions of Assyrian imperialism therefore helped create a kind of "detached" elite identity that, together with agricultural intensification, amplified production for trade, increased militarization, and state administrative expansion, contributed to the growing monopolization of state hegemony over various social fields within each population.

Writing and Literacy in Israel and the Transjordan

It is commonly held that the West Semitic scripts began to diverge into localized forms during the ninth century BCE. The fact that the development of different scripts complemented the emergence of small-scale polities in the southern Levant suggests that

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[738] Routledge 2004: 207. For example, Halpern effectively conveys how human experience in Judah could have been reordered by specific events (Sennacherib's campaign in 701 BCE) and by specific projects (fortification building).

[739] Archaeological evidence for these elite identities in the Transjordan is most clearly evident in the late sixth and fifth centuries, after the dissolution of Iron Age monarchies. This evidence consists primarily of individuated burials and funerary assemblages that closely resemble those from elsewhere in the Persian Empire (Routledge 2004: 208).

[740] Routledge 2004: 209. Routledge follows D. Hopkins (1996: 121-139) in noting that such a development would explain the prophetic indictments against those "who add field to field until there is no room for anyone" (Isaiah 5: 8). A region in Israel that has revealed itself as a good candidate for just such an agricultural intensification is the central range and western slopes of the north-central hill country. The results of the Ephraim survey published by Finkelstein in 1988-1989 have shown that Iron II expansion in this region "was governed by factors dictating intensification of high-value crops," namely, the lucrative olive oil industry (J. Holladay 1995: 390; cf. Finkelstein 1988-1989: 151-152).

each script was in some way linked with the development of an ethnic identity in each polity. This articulation of an ethnic identity is most clearly expressed in the continuous texts of the region emerging from the elite, royal sphere (i.e. royal inscriptions). Through the production of these documents, the upper echelons of each Levantine polity expressed a view of themselves as having "stable territorial boundaries, in which groups claiming descent from common ancestors were unified by patron deities and common dialects."[741] Deities such as Melkart of Aram, Kemosh of Moab, or Milkom of Ammon are continually mentioned or even addressed in royal monumental and dedicatory inscriptions.

It is important to be precise as to the relationship of the dialect of these royal and elite productions with the actual languages of the populations of the southern Levant. Given the ill-defined and shifting political borders of the Cisjordan and Transjordanian polities,[742] there is no *a priori* reason to assume that the variations in the texts from these regions should reflect four or five distinct languages spoken by the populations of the territories claimed by the five monarchies known from historical and literary documents. It is better to speak therefore of "dialectal variation" than of discrete languages.[743] Linguistic dialects in the Cisjordan and Transjordan doubtless were shaped as much by settlement patterns and major geographical barriers separating settlement groups as they were by monarchic territorial claims (see the discussion of "prestige dialects" below). And since written documentation comprises the only evidence for dialectal variation, it is not possible to sketch out a "dialect geography," only a "written dialect geography."[744]

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[741] Joffe 2002: 452.

[742] The self-perception of the Levantine elites in each polity (i.e., that their kingdom was a totality with stable political boundaries) contrasts with the reality on the ground, as has been made evident through the preceding survey of the archaeological data for each region.

[743] Cf. M. Dijkstra 1991: 268.

[744] Parker 2002: 44. Cf Aufrecht (1999), who acknowledges the current impossibility of resolving the question of whether there was an Ammonite "language" or "dialect," as the corpus of Ammonite texts "is neither large enough nor sufficiently varied enough to provide a decisive data-set of phonological, morphological, syntactical and lexical features" (p. 171). As for Edomite, there are too few Edomite inscriptions known to permit any conclusion about whether or not Edomite was an independent dialect; furthermore, while there is a recognizable cursive Edomite script in the seventh and early sixth centuries, "there are no significant linguistic differences between texts that are demonstrably Edomite and texts written in the contemporary Hebrew of Cisjordan" (Vanderhooft 1995: 157). In fact, "there are no reliable linguistic criteria for classifying inscriptions as Edomite" (Parker 2002: 51). These observations make the presence of so-called "Edomite" inscriptions of uncertain relevance as a socio-political indicator (particularly in Negev sites, where a mixture of cultures is represented; see section on Horvat Qitmit in Chapter 5).

It is important to remember that these written dialects (at least in the case of Ammonite, Moabite, and Hebrew) were "shaped by the centers in which writing was important, the relations among those centers, and the relations between them and peripheral sites where writing is found."[745] S. Parker classifies the dialect of the court as reflected in documentation coming from the royal city, as well as in inscriptions found elsewhere that emerged from royal administration, as a "prestige dialect." As a prestige dialect, the dialect of this community would have greatly influenced other written productions from other towns. The language of the royal inscriptions is therefore an elite, scribal construct that purposefully distinguishes itself in subtle ways from the languages of the royal inscriptions from neighboring regions and provides something of a template for the inscribing of texts from the territory claimed by the monarch. It is in the content and form of these inscriptions that the scribes seek to connect the territorial claims of the royal house with the regionally and even internationally recognized methods of legitimizing kingship.[746]

Before turning to a discussion of the monumental inscriptions, it is pertinent to remark on the major methodological problem faced by epigraphers studying the Transjordanian inscriptions in particular: this is the difficulty of clearly distinguishing the Ammonite, Moabite, and Edomite dialects.[747] Except for the Mesha Inscription, the body of texts that provide solid information regarding these dialects is limited in number as well as in length; many come from unprovenanced contexts.[748] When an inscription

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[745] Parker 2002: 44.

[746] Given this observation above, it is interesting to note that the texts in Ammonite are written in a script with a strong Aramaic character; this fact attests to the powerful political and cultural influence that Aram-Damascus exercised on northern and central Jordan until Damascus fell to the Assyrians in 732 BCE (P.K. McCarter 1991: 97).

[747] For example, in an appendix to his book *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions* ("Appendix I—Classification), Aufrecht classifies the inscriptions he has included as (genuinely) "Ammonite," "probably Ammonite," "possibly Ammonite," and "other" (1989: 349-350). This last category includes inscriptions that may be forgeries, as well as inscriptions that are really in other languages. In all there are 274 texts that fall into one of these three categories; of these, 147 are listed in Aufrecht 1989: 349-350, and 127 in Appendix I of Aufrecht 1999: 163-188. The vast majority of these texts are between one and three words long. Most are unprovenanced.

[748] For seals and seal impressions from unprovenanced contexts, the criteria used for identifying the language of the inscriptions are onomastics (specifically divine names), paleography, and iconography. See, for example, the "Ammonite" and "Moabite" seals published by P. Bourdreuil (1987: 283-286), and the "Moabite, Aramaic, and Hebrew" seals published by Aufrecht and Shury (1997: 57-68); all are unprovenanced and are classified on the basis of these criteria. None of these criteria serves as a completely reliable indicator of language or dialect (see Parker 2002: 51-53 and Routledge 2004: 190 for a critique of this methodology). In longer texts, the Aramaic character of the Ammonite script allows it, at

contains a personal name with a theophoric element that corresponds to a distinctive national or regional deity, as in –Kemosh (Moab) or –Qaus (Edom), it can reasonably be assumed that the inscription's dialect also corresponds to that nationality (particularly if the inscription is provenanced).[749] Given the miniscule number of texts (in comparison with Hebrew and Aramaic texts), their extreme brevity, and the fact that so many are unprovenanced, however, it often becomes quite difficult to specify where exactly the boundaries lay between groups speaking different dialects. (For example, Aufrecht classifies the Heshbon ostraca as Ammonite; Hübner, on the other hand, argues for a Moabite identification of these texts, coming as they do from a traditionally Moabite site.)[750] Parker suggests the following method of analyzing an inscription from outside the capital city or of unknown provenance: "to describe the language and other features of the text and note its relations with contiguous dialects, remembering that it is not necessary to claim that it is identical with any one of them."[751]

Writing and Literacy: Monumental Inscriptions

A remarkable number of physical, organizational, and thematic features distinguish royal Levantine inscriptions of the first millennium BCE. Most were inscribed on stone, in a lapidary (formal cursive) script,[752] and were apparently set up at the dedication of a structure or monument.   Of those inscriptions whose contents make reference to the dedication of a building or monument, epigraphers have identified two general categories: dedicatory and memorial.[753] The contents of dedicatory and memorial

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least, to be distinguished with some certainty from the scripts used in the Cisjordan and in Moab and Edom (Parker 2002: 48).

[749] It is not necessarily the case, however, that the text in which the personal name occurs is written in the corresponding dialect. The person with a name containing the element –Qaus, for example, could have resided in a Moabite linguistic community.

[750] Aufrecht 1989 (*CAI* 65, 76, 80, 81, 94, and 137); Hübner (with Knauf) 1994: 82-87.

[751] Parker 2002: 46.

[752] Just as with the Phoenician monumental inscriptions, the lapidary script exhibited on the royal inscriptions from the southern Levant evolved under the influence of cursive script, principally in ink. In other words, the innovations in script took place first in (semi-)cursive before their use in lapidary script (E. Puech 1991: 233).

[753] J. Maxwell Miller (1974: 9-18) seems to have been the first scholar to use the terms "memorial inscription" and "dedicatory inscription" to designate the two common types of inscriptions found in Syria/Palestine. More recently, J. Drinkard (1989: 131-132) has described the essential elements of these two varieties of inscriptions: in memorial inscriptions, (1) the identity of the king and his claim to the throne introduces the text, which then (2) continues by reviewing the king's accomplishments (often in the first person), using the occasion of a building or shrine dedication to commemorate the achievements of the

inscriptions are quite similar in that they refer to the king who makes the dedication and the deity who receives it. The difference lies in the relative emphasis on the king's achievements: memorial inscriptions go much farther in memorializing the king's major accomplishments.

Royal inscriptions are not merely standardized exemplars of stereotyped propaganda legitimizing kingship. When comparing the royal inscriptions of the Levantine rulers with those of the Neo-Assyrian kings, it is clear that the former make less ambitious claims regarding their rank and power.[754] Whereas the cosmology suffusing Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions depicts the king as partaking directly in the divine and omnipotent quality of the gods who commission him, such is clearly not the case in the Levantine inscriptions: higher forces commission him, but frequent references to oracles from the principal deity of the state express a certain conception of the king as servant or lieutenant for this national god.[755] This special rapport between the king and the national deity (often mediated by prophetic oracles) seems particularly evident at three important moments in the exercise of the royal power: during the seizure of power, in the conducting of war, and during the launching of great public works.[756] Moreover, whereas the royal inscriptions of Neo-Assyrian kings make claims for world dominion

king, and (3) concludes by invoking curses on anyone who removes or defaces the inscription. Dedicatory inscriptions can be distinguished from memorial inscriptions in that they (1) begin with a description of the object being dedicated; (2) mention the king only secondarily, and (3) finish by requesting blessings for the king. It is evident from Drinkard's analysis of these inscriptions that one should not fix these genres of dedicatory and memorial inscriptions too rigidly, as some inscriptions display a combining set of features or do not perfectly exhibit the traits of the genre that they largely represent; see, for example, the Aramaic inscription of Kilamuwa II, written in Phoenician orthography (ca. 830-825 BCE), the Phoenician inscription of Yahimilk (ca. 950-940 BCE), and the Aramaic inscription of Panammu (ca. 732-731 BCE), which mix elements of the dedicatory inscription and the memorial inscription (Drinkard 1989: 138-139).

[754] I owe this observation to Routledge 2004: 140, 158-159.

[755] Reference is often made therefore to the fact that the god chose the "author" of the stele to be king and that the god has granted the king success against his enemies. For example, in the Tel Dan Inscription (mid-ninth century BCE), the subject declares "[And] Hadad made me king … (line 4) (A. Biran and J. Naveh 1995: 13). In the Mesha Inscription (ca. 850 BCE), Mesha announces that he "made a 'high place' for Kemosh in Qarḥō, a 'high [place of sal] vation, because he saved me from all the kings and because he caused me to prevail over all my enemies…" (lines 3-4) (Routledge 2004: 135). The Stele of Zakkur (ca. 785 BCE), which concerns the deliverance of the capital of Zakkur, the king of Hamat and Louʿaš, records that "Baʿalšamayn [helped me] and stood with me. Baʿalšamayn made me king [over] [Ha]zarikka…" (lines 3-4; Drinkard 1989: 149).

[756] Lemaire 1997: 183. This is not to say that prophetic oracles are not a feature of Neo-Assyrian inscriptions as well. Assyrian scribes documented prophetic oracles in reports, and from the time of Esarhaddon began to collect them as archival records. It was not until late in the Neo-Assyrian empire, however, that the Assyrian kings Esarhaddon (681-669 BCE) and Assurbanipal (669-ca. 631 or 627 BCE) began to claim to have received prophetic messages supporting their rule or giving them courage in war, contrary to previous royal inscriptions (see M. Nissinen 2000: 235-271, especially pp. 242-254).

and superiority over all,[757] the Levantine rulers are quite candid about the competing claims of the other competitors of equal or even superior status with whom they grapple.[758] In other words, they represent "a culturally specific, rather than generalized, royal ideology."[759]

The wide distribution of royal lapidary inscriptions in the Levant, from the north to the south, reveals their important role as a common medium for expressing and representing kingship. The neighboring polities of Moab, Ammon, Israel, Judah, Aram-Damascus, and the Philistine city-state of Ekron (Tel Miqne) have all yielded either clear or possible examples;[760] these examples legitimate kingship in ways already familiar from the Early Phoenician corpus (see the previous chapter). The royal inscriptions from the southern Levant therefore can be said to exhibit a kind of pan-Canaanite scribal tradition spearheaded by the Phoenician cities. There are also a plethora of examples

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[757] See for example the Annals of Sennacherib (704-681 BCE), where Sennacherib in typical royal hyperbole claims his sovereignty over "all princes of the four quarters … from the upper sea of the setting sun to the lower sea of the rising sun" (D. Luckenbill 1924: 66, lines 2-3).

[758] The subject of the Tel Dan Inscription relates that "my father lay down, he went to his [ancestors] (viz. became sick and died). And the king of I[s]rael entered previously my father's land … And Hadad went in front of me … and I slew [seve]nty kin[gs] … [I killed Jeho]ram son of [Ahab] king of Israel, and [I] killed [Ahaz]iahu son of [Jehoram kin] g of the House of David" (lines 3-8) (A. Biran and J. Naveh 1995: 13). Mesha reports that Kemosh has saved him from "all the kings" and that these kings included Omri, King of Israel, who "oppressed Moab many days … but I prevailed over him and over his house…" (lines 5 and 7) (Routledge 2004: 135). Zakkur reveals in lines 4 and 5 of his stele that "Barhadad son of Hazael, king of Syria, united against me… ten kings: Barhadad and his army; Bargush and his army; … [lines 6-10 list more kings and their actions against Zakkur] But I lifted my hand to Ba'alshamayn, and Ba'alshamayn answered me…" (line 11) (Drinkard 1989: 149-150).

[759] Routledge 2004: 140.

[760] For inscriptions from Moab, Ammon, and Ekron, see the discussion below (pp. 233-238). The inscription from the site of Tel Dan in Israel is an Aramean inscription written by a king from Syria. It was presumably written after the conquest of Dan, as the contents refer to Hadad as the writer's god and to his victories over at least one Israelite ruler. The excavators attribute the stele to King Hazael of Aram-Damascus and date it to the middle of the ninth century (Biran and Naveh 1995: 1-9 and 1993: 81-98). Biran and Naveh's dating and attribution of the inscription to Hazael has largely been accepted; cf. Na'aman 2000: 92-104. But see G. Athas (2003: 258f.) for the alternative view that Hazael's son Bar Hadad II authored the inscription. A fragment of a limestone stela comes from Samaria in Israel: it is a piece of a stone tablet 10.5 cm in size, which is "carefully engraved in the first line of the inscription with three beautiful letters" which read: *'šr* ("which/who") (see p. 200 and n. 613 above). Fragments of two possible formal inscriptions were found in Jerusalem. One (ca. 700 BCE) comes from the excavations at the City of David and contains what may be a date (*sbr h* [ ] *bšb' 'šr* [ ] *rb'y w* [: 'on the seventeenth [day of the] fourth [month]'); it is engraved in a formal cursive script (G. Davies 1991a, no. 4.120 = Renz Jer (8): 32, pp. 190-191). The other may have been part of a large stele, as is suggested by the thickness of the stone and the script (G.I. Davies 1991a, no. 4.125 = Renz Jer (7): 39, pp. 266-267. It was found on the Ophel hill, south of the Temple Mount. It is a fragment of a heavy stone-slab measuring 27x24 cm and 10 cm thick. It contains the beginnings of four lines of an inscription, of which only three complete words can be distinguished: *mtht* ("underneath, below"), *hmym* ("the water), and *byrkty* ("in the back side, in the innermost part") (Avigad 1993: 526).

from the Aramean and Neo-Hittite kingdoms of the northern Levant, dating from a period in the ninth century BCE down through the fourth century (under the Achaemenid Persian Empire).[761]

These latter inscriptions emulate the Phoenician scribal tradition in a much more direct way than those from the southern Levant. There appears to have been a continuous influence exerted by the Phoenician coast among the western Aramean and Neo-Hittite states. In fact, up until the eighth century BCE, the script on Aramaic inscriptions from Syria and Anatolia is quite similar to the ninth-century Phoenician script; it does not begin to show characteristics that may be termed specifically Aramean until the eighth century.[762] In his study of Phoenician texts, Y. Avishur has argued that the tradition of writing royal inscriptions, already extant in Phoenicia from the tenth century, may have spurred the penetration of Phoenician as a literary language there.[763]

These inscriptions are more than merely the sum of their parts – they are more than their message.[764] The fact of their conforming to the general conventions of Iron Age royal inscriptions in the Levant means that the contents, organization, and style of

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[761] For a fairly comprehensive list of the inscriptions from the northern Levant, see Routledge 2004: 155 and especially note 3 (p. 241).

[762] Pitard 1994: 226-227.

[763] Avishur 2000: 156. During the Iron Age, the cities of the Syrian coast came under the control of Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos. These ports served the newly constituted Neo-Hittite kingdoms along the coast and in the interior, which in turn had "preferential dealings" with the Phoenicians during the Iron Age and came under their influence. (The principal ports of Amurru were at Tel 'Arqa, Tel Kazel (Sumur), Amrit, and Arvad.) The evidence of inscriptions and personal names from Hamath shows that this Neo-Hittite kingdom too had connections with the Phoenicians, even before it obtained control over Amurru in the eighth century (see especially the Stela of Zakkur). (For more on Phoenician presence and influence in these cities, see Peckham 2001: 26-31.) A Phoenician scribal and literary tradition likewise made inroads in Anatolia, as attested by the Zinjirli and the Karatepe inscriptions. The Kilamuwa inscriptions from Zinjirli, dated to the last quarter of the ninth century, were written in a dialect of Phoenician like that of old Byblian. Although the king for whom they were written possessed a Neo-Hittite name, and their script was Aramaic, these texts were nonetheless written in Phoenician orthography and "in an elegant old Phoenician literary style" that points to the establishment of a Byblian scribal tradition in Zinjirli by the ninth century (Peckham 2001: 32; cf. Avishur 2000: 153-170). From a region nearby (Karatepe in Cilicia) comes the Karatepe inscription, dated to around a century later than the Kilamuwa inscriptions (late eighth century). Written for a king with a Luwian name (Azatiwada), this inscription exists in three Phoenician versions and in two Neo-Hittite hieroglyphic versions (Avishur 2000: 171-182; cf. Peckham 2001: 32. For the fading of Phoenician cultural influence in Anatolia and in North Syria with the growing dominance of the Arameans, see Peckham 2001: 32-33.

[764] The observation made by P. Machinist (1993) regarding the value of the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions as sources for political and military history can be said to be true for these Levantine inscriptions as well: their value as sources lies not in their accounts of history (accounts which are typically distorted and incomplete), but as "actual historical reality themselves," witnessing to the social context in which they were written, and to the mentality of the people who wrote them (p. 79).

each inscription point to a large body of textual practices linked to kingship. Given the knowledge of other royal inscriptions displayed in the composition of these inscriptions, as well their structured and rhetorically elevated language, it is evident that those responsible for the creation of these texts were individuals possessing a high level of scribal expertise. In an environment of restricted literacy, the imputation that these inscriptions are the work of the monarch (i.e. they are frequently narrated in the first person by the monarch) is probably a literary conceit. There is no evidence that the kings were literate enough or professionally enough trained to have composed them.[765]

In attempting to delineate the possible audiences for these inscriptions, it is important to consider the context in which these inscriptions are found, and not just to discuss them in splendid isolation. Of course, only the fully literate would have gotten the entire message of these Levantine royal inscriptions; such an audience would have been highly restricted during this period. Nevertheless, the very public character of the stela's location as well as its association with other objects would have ensured that the message would have been conveyed to even the most illiterate onlooker. In other words, the context of an inscription's erection would have contained associations signifying a similar range of symbols (i.e. those associated with kingliness); furthermore, these objects (the inscription and its accompanying architecture and statuary, for example) would have been set apart from run-of-the-mill items.[766] In this way, even an illiterate person would have been able to comprehend the basic meaning (i.e. the royal reference) of a royal inscription. Furthermore, for the illiterate person, the very alienness of the script would have worked together with the accompanying objects and/or buildings to convey a message of power, fear, and obedience; the onlooker would have recognized that the script and stela constituted a communicative system that was beyond his control.[767] This is not to suggest that the semi-literate or illiterate population of these states never heard the contents of the royal inscriptions; just as in Assyria, public readings may have orally communicated the texts of these inscriptions.[768] In sum, the royal inscriptions from the Levantine region not only possess a global context

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[765] *Ibid,* 97.
[766] See Routledge 2004: 154-155 for this insight.
[767] Machinist 1999: 101.
[768] See Machinist 1997: 99 for occasions in which Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions and letters may have been read out loud.

(comparisons with other royal inscriptions), but also a local context – along with other media (buildings, statuary) transmitting things expressive of kingship.

Mesha Inscription (MI = *KAI* 181)

In a series of articles and a lengthy monograph on Moab during the Iron Age, Routledge has argued that the Mesha Inscription (MI), a mid-ninth century BCE memorial stele, was engaged in the "ideological project of legitimizing and reproducing kingship in Moab."[769] If one follows Routledge in thinking of the MI in terms of an intellectual product, then its analysis becomes an exercise in determining the various cultural resources it harnesses to accomplish the project of asserting Mesha's hegemony over Moab. For example, it is evident that the writers of the inscription creatively made use of a set of scribal tools that were available to them, i.e. that were in circulation as a body of technical knowledge related to the authoring of royal inscriptions. In a more detailed fashion, B. Margalit has highlighted the scribal skill evident in the inscription's use of "poetic features and cadences"; the author's repeated use of the prosodic feature of "alliteration" (or "consonance" or "assonance") in particular links the inscription to the epic-poetic tradition of Ugaritic literature.[770] In fact, the influence of the Old Canaanite prosodic tradition of the second millennium seems to have been very pronounced in the entire corpus of ninth century Northwest Semitic inscriptions.[771]

In terms of its contents, the MI expresses a conception of the land of Moab as the sacred property of the god Kemosh, who through the king as his chief representative, exerts his claim to the totality of the people, resources, and land. In this way, Moab is asserted to exist as a totality, even though no such state appears to have existed as yet.[772] But such claims paved the way for the formulation of practices and policies (such as state building programs and tax collection) that presumed the existence of just such an entity. In other words, the MI "is about historymaking."[773] Moreover, it would appear that Mesha successfully mobilized the idea of Moab as a territorial polity – a "land" or

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[769] Routledge 2004: 133-153, especially p. 140; 2000: 221-256; 1997: 130-144, especially pp. 138-140.
[770] Margalit 1994: 271-272.
[771] See Margalit 1994: 274, who notes the prevalence of the "alliterative factor" in the Dan and Amman Citadel inscriptions, in the Deir 'Alla plaster inscriptions, and even in the small amount of text material preserved in the stele fragment from Kerak.
[772] See the section on state formation in Moab above, pp. 209-213.
[773] Routledge 2004: 141.

"thing" – rather than simply a geographic designation (as it had been in earlier periods[774]).[775]

In addition to conceptualizing Moab as a "thing," the MI also projects the royal stature of the new king Mesha through the monumentalization in writing of his victories over the Israelites (MI: 4-21). His desire to instill an ideology of legitimacy leads him to boast of his patrimony (his father "ruled over Moab"; MI: 2-3)[776] and of his deeds pertaining both to the cult (he built a high-place for Kemosh; MI: 3-4), as well as to Moab's defense and well being (he claims for example to have erected fortification walls, towers, a royal palace, and water works at Qirhoh; MI: 9-10, 21-24).[777] It should not be forgotten that Mesha's strategy for integrating the segmented landscape of Iron I Moab into a new, more unified political structure went beyond simply instilling an ideology of legitimacy. As reported in his royal stela, this strategy included slaughtering the conquered settlement's citizens and then forcibly resettling others in their place (MI: 11-14; 16-17). The slaughter referenced by the inscription also has strong religious connotations: in killing the inhabitants of Nebo, Mesha explicitly invokes *herem* against the town (MI: 17; and possibly implicitly against 'Atarot in MI: 10-13), which has the effect of making these two cities the "inalienable possession (through destruction)" of the Moabite deity Kemosh.[778]

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[774] As a geographic designation, the term "the land of Moab" dates back at least to the ninth year of the reign of Rameses II (ca. 1270 BCE). Moab is written with the determinative sign for a foreign land or hilly country on the north end of the east wall of Rameses II's court in the Upper Egyptian Temple of Luxor, in the context of a scene depicting Rameses II's "minor wars." The determinative sign generally demarcates a geographical or political entity, rather than a regional subdivision or a group of people (see Routledge 2004: 58-59).

[775] Nevertheless, the contents of the MI do not suggest that Moab was a unified entity, "possessing a monopoly on coercive force and a centralized, institutionalized, and internally specialized administrative body"; rather, it portrays an image of Moab "that recognizes political identities below that of the state and seems to incorporate them into, rather than replace them with, the concept of Moab" (*ibid*, 151).

[776] The reference to Mesha's father represents another propaganda tactic as well. As Na'aman (2000: 92-104) has pointed out, the mention of "real or imaginary failures in the time of the father" serves to "extol the achievements of the son" (p. 98). This is a characteristic of royal inscriptions in the Near East, and can be seen in the Tel Dan inscription (which like the MI dates an Israelite offensive and conquest to the time of the writer's father) and in the contemporary inscription of Kilamuwa, the king of Sam'al.

[777] In the reporting of Mesha's deeds, we see one of the forms of what Bourdieu (1977) terms "legitimate accumulation," i.e. one of the indirect ways that symbolic capital is used to reproduce the relations of domination. Through his legitimacy-giving deeds, Mesha secures "a capital of 'credit' which seems to owe nothing to the logic of exploitation," but which in reality perpetuates it (pp. 196-197).

[778] In the Hebrew bible (Leviticus 27: 26-29), the notion of *herem* functions to render something irredeemable or inalienable through its dedication as the property of Yahweh. Routledge (2004) argues that in the MI, "the invocation of *herem* emphasizes the oppositional (and hence equivalent) nature of Moab and

The MI can be interpreted by more than merely its content, but also by "its position within a system of signifiers."[779] For example, this inscription explicitly names a structure or complex with which it was to be associated ("this high place for Kemosh"; MI: 3). The earlier discussion of architecture and sculpture with probable kingly associations uncovered in Moab to date suggests that the MI can be seen as one of a mosaic of intellectual products, including Iron Age architecture, sculpture, and (possibly) other royal inscriptions[780] that signified royal practices in Moab.[781]

Amman Citadel Inscription (*CAI* 59)

Dated to the last half of the ninth century or the early eighth century and written in Aramaic script,[782] the stone inscription[783] found at the Citadel of ʻAmman quite cleverly legitimizes the king and his building projects by couching itself in the style of a prophetic oracle (given in the name of the god Milkom) that has already granted the god's authorization for the building and that assures the king of victory and prosperity. As in the MI, wherein the god Kemosh speaks directly to Mesha, the deity of the Amman Citadel Inscription addresses the unnamed Ammonite king in direct speech. In the form of an oracular command, Milkom directs the king to build *mb't*, "structures/entrances,"

Israel by denying the possibility either of incorporating subunits associated with Israel (e.g., Men of Gad [for whom the king of Israel had built ʻAtarot; MI: 10-11]) into Moab or of mutual recognition via exchange (as in the case of tributary relations)" (p. 150).

[779] Routledge 2004: 153.

[780] The MI may not have existed in isolation as a testimony to this hegemonic project of Moab; a fragment of a possible second Mesha Inscription was discovered at al-Karak, built into a house wall. This Kerak fragment may have been accompanied by a relief, i.e. an image that may have cross-referenced the inscription (there is a hint of a fringe of clothing on the fragment). The Kerak Fragment consists of thirty-one consonants spread over three lines of text (five more consonants are partially discernible). Unfortunately, a reconstruction of even a single line is largely a matter of guesswork. According to the reconstruction of Margalit (1994), the stele appears to have been erected by Mesha in part to honor his father (KF: 3), but mainly to cite Mesha's achievements (pp. 278-279).

[781] Among the "category of kingly things consciously deployed in Moab…" and "…in a common manner across political boundaries in the Iron Age southern Levant" (Routledge 2004: 176) are public buildings, city fortifications, fortified gateways, frontier fortifications, and proto-Ionic capitals.

[782] Aufrecht (1999a: 164) follows Cross (1969: 13-19) in dating the Citadel inscription to the last half of the ninth century. A number of other scholars (Millard 1991: 141; Lemaire 1997: 180-181; Israel 1997: 106) date the inscription to the beginning of the eighth century, however. The late ninth/early eighth century date that has been given to this inscription is based largely on the assumption that the Ammonites initially used the Aramaic script to write the Ammonite language, and that Ammonite handwriting did not become independent from the Aramaic script until the mid-eighth century BCE (see Aufrecht 1999a: 166-171 for the basis of dating Ammonite inscriptions).

[783] The Citadel inscription is on a large stone slab measuring 24 x 19 centimeters. Only eight lines can be made out (B. MacDonald 1999: 39).

either for defensive purposes, or as parts of the citadel or even a temple. Like the MI, the inscription therefore appears to have been designed to be interpreted with reference to the building project it mentions. In both inscriptions, the privileged position occupied by the king is achieved by the beneficence of the god. The god therefore holds an ideologically important role, as his empowering and directing of the king provides the king with legitimization on a national level.

The Amman Citadel inscription does not exist in isolation as a testimony to the hegemonic project of Ammon. Other monumental inscriptions discovered in the area of the ancient Ammonite capital of ʿAmman include the Amman Theater Inscription (ca. 600 BCE; *CAI* 58), the Amman Statue Inscription (eighth century BCE; *CAI* 43), and the Tel Siran Bottle (ca. 600 BCE; *CAI* 148).[784] The first, uncovered during the excavation of the Roman theater, probably represents a building inscription, although only two lines remain. The second inscription, on one of several statues found in ʿAmman, is engraved on the base of the statue of *yrhʿzr*, a grandson of the Ammonite king Šanipu mentioned in the account of the second campaign of Tiglath-pileser III (ca. 734-733 BCE).[785] The Tel Siran Bottle, excavated on the campus of the University of Jordan in northwest ʿAmman, bears a text which was written for Amminadab, son of Hissal-el, son of Amminadab, each titled "king of the Ammonites."[786]

Unfortunately, one can only speculate on how the spatial locations of many of the texts described above, including the Mesha Inscription, supported the meaning of the text. The MI, Amman Citadel Inscription, Amman Theater Inscription, and the Tel Siran Bottle all name objects, structures, and complexes with which the inscriptions are to be associated, but which no longer exist. Unfortunately, the original context for most of the royal inscriptions that have been found to date in the southern Levant has been lost

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[784] Non-monumental in character, but created as part of monumental artworks, are the letters and religious symbols engraved on the backs of eyes fixed in the heads of female statues found on the Amman Acropolis (seventh century BCE; *CAI* 73). These inscriptions were probably designed to indicate correct placement of the eyes by the craftsmen (Israel 1997: 106).

[785] Aufrecht 1999a: 164.

[786] For a discussion of the Tel Siran inscription, see below.

thanks to their reuse as building blocks in other structures (e.g., the Tel Dan inscription),[787] or to their purchase on the antiquities black market.

Tel Miqne Inscription

There is one royal dedicatory inscription from the southern Levant (in Philistia) whose location of discovery conveys much about the original context of its erection: the early seventh century Tel Miqne (Ekron) Inscription. This five-line inscription was found on a limestone block immediately adjacent to the wall from which it had evidently fallen. The wall belongs to the primary room (a colonnaded cella) of a large open-court complex (termed Temple Complex 650 by its excavators).[788] This complex is identified in the inscription as a temple for a goddess named *ptgyh*.[789] The excavators found a stepped stone threshold in front of the find-spot of the inscription, and suggested this may have been a raised dais at the western end of the cella, directly opposite the doorway. They hypothesized therefore that the inscription would have been located very near the spatial and visual focal point of the cella, and perhaps the entire complex.[790] When the context of the inscription is treated as well as its contents, its meaning becomes more profound: the inscription does not merely exist on its own, but its physicality and context in an environment built by the king expresses the ideological inscribing of the king on the landscape.

Tel Siran Bottle Inscription (*CAI* 148)

Along these lines, the Tel Siran Bottle inscription offers an intriguing conundrum: the inscription was written on a bronze bottle (10 cm in length) that contained a sample of roasted wheat and cereal grains. Generally dated by scholars to ca. 600 BCE,[791] the bottle's text is the only completely preserved continuous Ammonite inscription known.

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[787] The Tel Dan inscription, inscribed on a basalt stela, was discovered in secondary use in the remains of a wall bordering a large pavement at the entrance to the outer gate of the city of Dan (Biran and Naveh 1993: 81).

[788] See Gitin 2003: 284-286 and Gitin and Cogan 1997: 192-202.

[789] The inscription dedicates the temple, "this *bt/byt*" (lit. "house") to the goddess *ptgyh*, "his lady," on behalf of *'kys*, the ruler of Ekron.

[790] Gitin and Cogan 1997: 7.

[791] Ca. 600 BCE is the generally accepted date for the Tel Siran Bottle Inscription, although Naveh (1987) has dated the inscription to the period around 667 BCE (pp. 119-111; the most recent edition of the inscription is found in Aufrecht 1989: 203-211).

The inscription lists four (nonmilitary) agricultural installations of the Ammonite king Amminadab (*'mndb*): according to Klaus Beyer's recent translation, these are "the vineyard, the garden, the orchard and cisterns" (*hkrm whgnt wh'thr w'šht*).[792] Walter Aufrecht understands the tenor of the text to be votive, and translates it to read: "May the produce (*m'bd*) of 'Amminadab king of the Ammonites, the son of Hassil'il king of the Ammonites, the son of 'Amminadab king of the Ammonites—the vineyard and the garden(s) and the hollow and the cistern—cause rejoicing and gladness for many days (to come) and in years far off."[793] If the term *m'bd* is translated as "deeds," however, then the inscription represents a kind of royal building or commemorative inscription.[794]

If the translation of *m'bd* as "deeds" is accepted, then this inscription becomes somewhat of an oddity, as it clearly represents a royal inscription, yet one that is not inscribed on the monumental type of medium (typically stone). What is interesting is that the bottle contains samples of grains and roasted wheat which conceivably came from the agricultural installations that the bottle celebrates as the deed of the king, to "cause joy and pleasure for many days and in far off years" (ll. 6-8). The meaning of the text on the bottle appears thereby to be supported by its contents. Even if the inscription on the bottle is interpreted as votive, i.e. as a "petition from or on behalf of the king to an unnamed deity for successful and long-lasting produce," the contents of the bottle may still represent the "produce" of line one – they would therefore be a kind of "first-fruits" offering.[795]

Writing and Literacy: Administrative and Ownership Inscriptions

The evidence from the most everyday inscriptions all the way up to the loftiest royal inscriptions suggests the retaining of kinship as an organizing concept in the Levantine region throughout the Iron Age.   This can be seen on a very personalized scale in the extensive use of patronymics on seals and seal impressions. On these items, patrilineal descent as a complementary form of self-identification is well represented most commonly in the formula "X son of Y (male name)" (or less frequently "X daughter

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[792] K. Beyer 1995: 389-391.
[793] Aufrecht 1999a: 164.
[794] See Beyer 1995: 390; this kind of translation is accepted as a possibility by Aufrecht (1999a: 164).
[795] Aufrecht 1999b: 155.

of Y [male name]"). The number of these seals and seal impressions increases dramatically during the Iron II period in every territory of the southern Levant, although not every polity has yielded the same amount. The relatively small number of seals discovered in these regions (and particularly in Israel, Moab, and Edom) suggests that this use of writing remained restricted to certain members of the elite classes. Furthermore, the majority of the seals (235 out of approximately 240) that are purportedly Ammonite are engraved on gem stones, media which suggest elite ownership.[796]

In royal inscriptions, the expression of state hegemony in terms of dynastic, ancestral, and genealogical metaphors demonstrates that the organizing concept of kinship was successfully "writ large through the ethnic mechanisms of the state."[797] Many of the Iron Age states explicitly use both domestic ("House of X")[798] and genealogical ("Sons of X") metaphors to express a "hegemonic identity"; inherent in these metaphors is a conception of the state as a household in which the realm comprises the personal domain of the king in his role as the primary patriarch.[799] The diversity of naming formulae on the royal inscriptions indicates that each polity could conceive of itself according to different metaphors – not merely dynastic or ancestral ("House of David"/ "House of Omri"/ "House of Israel"/ "House of Judah") but also dynastic and territorial ("Sons of Ammon").[800] In the construction of state hegemony, these Iron Age states exploited the cultural resources available to them – both genealogical and domestic metaphors.

The evidence for the existence of kinship ties and lineages is not exclusive to seals and royal inscriptions. The Samaria ostraca, which record deliveries of commodities from rural sites to the royal center, represent more than just the first concrete evidence for the presence of administrative archives during the Iron Age in the southern Levant.[801] As many have noted, these brief texts also supply tangible,

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[796] For *CAI* references, see Aufrecht 1999a: 165-166, notes 9-14.
[797] Joffe 2002: 454.
[798] Several of the Aramean states in Syria and Upper Mesopotamia came to be called after the eponymous founder of the dynasty, using the form *bīt*-PN ("the house of PN") (Pitard 1994: 212).
[799] Routledge 2004: 6, 124.
[800] *Ibid*, 126-127.
[801] There is some disagreement over the exact nature of these ostraca as administrative documents. Rainey (1988: 69-74) and Herr (1997: 140) believe them to be brief notations recording shipments of wine and oil

contemporary proof for the existence of kinship ties in the form of lineages.[802] The ostraca name almost all of the clans of the tribe of Manasseh (Joshua 17), and all but Noah are associated in the ostraca with the circle of towns around Samaria likewise mentioned in the ostraca. Some of the ostraca (those from the year fifteen) also make mention of the clan districts associated with the towns.[803] The commodities were ostensibly sent from estates that were part of an ancient clan distribution system, very likely familial estates. The hypothesis that the individuals mentioned in the ostraca were owners of large estates in the Samaria district is supported by the fact that the names of only a few individuals occur repeatedly on the ostraca, in connection with transactions involving large amounts of goods being exchanged.[804]

A number of scholars have argued persuasively that these ostraca witness the growth of the large landowner in the region of Israel.[805] In the process of supplying goods to the palace, these landowners became even wealthier, joining a growing class of prosperous and influential merchants. Some of these landowners may have even acquired their estates outside of the clan framework. The ostraca from regnal years nine and ten (of an unnamed king), in contrast with those from years fifteen (also of an unnamed king), make no mention of the clan districts from which the shipment was made, only the town. A. Rainey has suggested that the landowners represented in these

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to officials from their respective land holdings. The "*l*-men" mentioned in the ostraca are "residents in Samaria, serving in the royal entourage" and the recipients of the commodities (Rainey 1988: 71); the understanding of the formula *l-* +PN appearing in these texts as recipients of the designated item is paralleled by many economic texts listing the distribution of food stuffs and various other commodities, including Tel Heshbon Ostracon A1 (ca. 600 BCE). According to this theory, the "non-*l*-men" are the senders, i.e. the "stewards of the recipients' estates located in towns outside of the capital of Samaria" (p. 72). Conversely, Cross (forthcoming: 75-76) understands the ostraca as tax receipts recording shipments coming from the estates of landed (military) nobility. He theorizes that the "non-*l*-men" are better understood as "tenants or clients or hired men, attached to an individual estate, who bring the appropriate taxes in kind to the royal storehouse to be credited to their lords, the "*l*-men" (p. 76).

[802] Cf. Halpern 1996: 306; Joffe 2002: 454; Kaufman 1982: 229-239; Rainey 1988: 71. In Faust's examination of the rural community in Iron II Israel (2000b: 17-39), he believes to have found archaeological evidence for the presence of kinship groups (probably lineages). His analysis of the size of dwellings and their internal division in rural settlements has revealed that the basic social units were large extended families that resided together (*bet av*). The organization of the villages themselves, together with the concentration of food processing installations in "industrial" zones within these villages, suggests to Faust that these families were organized into larger kinship groups, probably lineages (*mišpahah*), and that these groups "were probably responsible for production and storage facilities and can be seen as 'corporate groups'" (p. 23).

[803] Kaufman 1982: 230-231.

[804] Dever 1994: 426; cf. Herr 1997: 140.

[805] Dever 1994: 426-427; Herr 1997: 140; Rainey 1988: 71.

ostraca may have been "a newly appointed entourage," that is, men who were granted estates by the king in order to supply his court with commodities.[806]   If Rainey's interpretation of these ostraca is correct, than that would make them witnesses to the creation of a new class of elites outside of the clan framework.

Writing and Literacy: Letters

Letters, which are fairly well represented in the Judean corpus (although still relatively small in number; see the following chapter), are woefully rare in the Transjordanian corpus, and as yet non-existent in the Samarian corpus. It quite probable that numerous letters on papyrus have disintegrated; in this regard, it is noteworthy that the longest known letter written in a Transjordanian dialect was found at a site (Horvat 'Uza) in the desert, where inscriptions (particularly those written on papyrus) would be more likely to survive,[807] as opposed to the more humid regions to the north (such as Israel).[808]

Furthermore, the opening and greeting passages of the two letters on ostraca that are written in Transjordanian dialects (from Horvat 'Uza and Tel el-Mazar) contain formulae that conform to epistolary conventions known in contemporary letters from other southern Levantine regions. Indirect evidence that these scribal conventions were well known in Israel as well comes from the early eighth century inscriptions on two pithoi from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, a site in northern Sinai that was strongly influenced (and perhaps administrated) by Israel. Although these inscriptions occur in a cultic context and are not letters, they nonetheless contain formulae known from epistolary texts and therefore demonstrate the familiarity of the writer(s) with these scribal conventions.

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[806] Rainey 1988: 71. Rainey's interpretation is based upon his supposition that the ostraca from regnal years nine and ten chronologically follow those from the king whose years are fifteen. He identifies the latter king as Jehoash, and the former king (whose regnal years nine and ten are represented in the ostraca) as Jeroboam II.

[807] See, for example, the survival of a Hebrew letter on papyrus from Wadi Murabba'at found in a desert cave near the Dead Sea and dated to the first half of the seventh century (F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* 2005: 381-384). The papyrus is a palimpsest: the underwritten text is a letter, and the overwritten text is a list of names.

[808] As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the capital Samaria has produced evidence that papyrus documents were used in Israel, in the form of the fifty or so clay bullae discovered at the site. On one side of these bullae are seal impressions, while on the other side are the papyrus fiber marks of the documents they secured (J.W. Crowfoot, G.W. Crowfoot, K.M. Kenyon, *et al.* 1957: 2, 85, 88, 89; nos. 29-41).

The opening formula *'mr* PN1 *'mr* PN2 ("PN1 says: 'Say to PN2'") of the Horvat 'Uza ostracon,[809] the Tel el-Mazar ostracon 3,[810] and Kuntillet 'Ajrud Pithos 1[811] is known from a Phoenician letter on papyrus (*KAI* 50) found at Saqqara and dated to the late sixth century,[812] and possibly from the fragment of a papyrus letter written in Hebrew and found in a cave near the Dead Sea.[813] The greeting formula *hšlm 't* "Are you well?" in both Transjordanian examples (although without the interrogative *h* on the el-Mazar ostracon)[814] likewise appears at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Pithos 2) and in the Phoenician letter. Finally, the blessing formulation of the Horvat 'Uza ostracon (*whbrktk lqws* "I bless you by Qaus") is the same in the Phoenician letter (*brktk lb'lspn* "I bless you by Baal-Saphon") as well as in the Hebrew letters from Arad (nos. 16, 21, 40)[815] and of course in the cultic graffiti from Kuntillet 'Ajrud (e.g., *brkt 'tkm lyhwh šmrn wl'šrth* "I hereby bless you by Yahweh of Samaria and by his Asherah").[816] The formulaic and typological similarities of the two Transjordanian epistolary ostraca with the Hebrew cultic inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, the Hebrew letters from Arad and Wadi Murabba'at, and the Phoenician letter from Saqqara demonstrate that the Transjordanian (and certainly the Samarian) scribes were familiar with epistolary scribal conventions of the

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[809] The Horvat 'Uza ostracon is a late seventh/early sixth century Edomite inscription found at the site of Horvat 'Uza in the Negev (I. Beit-Arieh and B. Cresson 1985: 96-101). This ostracon is particularly intriguing because, while apparently written in Edomite script, it was discovered in the front chamber of the gatehouse of a Judean fortress. It is adjudged Edomite primarily on the basis of content ("I bless you by Qaus") and script (similar to the script of ostraca from Tel el-Kheleifeh, Umm el-Biyara and Buseirah). The main message of the letter contains delivery instructions in the second person imperative issued by the sender, as in the Arad letters.

[810] The Tel el-Mazar ostracon (no. 3; *CAI* 144) is an early-mid sixth century Ammonite inscription from the central Jordan Valley. This ostracon preserves parts of the first few lines of a personal letter, dated ca. 575 BCE (Aufrecht 1989: 334-337); it was discovered on the floor of a sixth-century building at Tel el-Mazar (3 km east of the Jordan above the Jabbok and 3 km northwest of Tel Deir 'Alla). One of the Tel al-'Umayri Ostraca (*CAI* 211) may be a letter or docket, also dated ca. 575 BCE (Aufrecht 1999a: 165).

[811] See Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* 2005: 289-298 for the inscriptions on Pithoi 1 and 2. This particular inscription is in early eighth-century Hebrew.

[812] See D. Pardee 1982: 165-168 for translation and analysis of this Phoenician letter.

[813] This is the Wadi Murabba'at papyrus, which is dated to the early seventh century BCE. The letter on this papyrus fragment contains one instance of *'mr* "to say," but it is difficult to read and possibly incomplete (Pardee 1982: 146; cf. Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* 2005: 381-384). Comparable to the double formulation of the opening formulae on the three inscriptions described above is the imperative…nominal formulation of Ugaritic opening formula, e.g. *rgm…thm* "Say…message of" (Pardee 1982: 167).

[814] Parker 2002: 50.

[815] For translation and analysis of the letters from Arad, see Pardee 1982: 145-152 and Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* 2005: 5-108.

[816] Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* 2005: 289-292. This blessing formula appears in inscriptions on both sides of Pithos 2 as well (*ibid*, pp. 293-297).

southern Levant, and that letter-writing was an established form of communication in the Transjordan, and doubtless in Israel as well.

Writing and Literacy: Cultic and Religious Inscriptions

  While the memorial and dedicatory inscriptions from the royal sphere have clear religious and cultic elements, this section deals with those inscriptions that reveal the interweaving of the religious and cultic spheres with the practical matters of day-to-day existence. The attribution of magical, transformative power to writing, a feature which often appears to characterize the use of writing in the southern Levant, highlights the religious and cultic character of much of the written material from this region during the Iron Age.[817] Moreover, the users of writing apparently drew sources of identity from the sacred sphere in their movement towards greater social cohesion and integration. The medium of writing enabled the elites of these polities to express in a more permanent form a conception of their state as bounded by clearly defined borders and as unified by a common past, dialect, and set of national deities.

  For example, the evidence from names and titles on seals and seal impressions suggests that the increasing use of writing in the everyday sphere facilitated not only the articulation of both local lineages, but also of religious traditions: personal names inscribed on seals clearly incorporate theophoric or theophoric-like elements such as Yahweh, El, Kemosh, Milkom,[818] Ba'al, Qaus[819] and others.[820] While it is notoriously

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[817] S. Niditch (1996), following R. Finnegan, has observed perceptively that oral composition does not cease once writing comes to a culture, and that "the oral aesthetic continues to be manifest even in written works" (p. 44).

[818] A seeming oddity in the Ammonite onomasticon is the fact that the *mlkm*-names are a fraction of *'l*-names; in blessing formulae, by contrast, the most common divine name is *mlkm* (Aufrecht 1999: 159; cf. Parker 2002: 49). It is possible that different tribal groups or kin groups in Ammon recognized different deities or aspects of deities. Aufrecht, following J. Tigay (1987: 187 n. 66), concludes from this that it is 'Il, not Milkom, who should be considered the chief deity of the Ammonites. Still, it is difficult to draw broad conclusions regarding the relative position of 'Il versus Milkom in the Ammonite cult based solely on the onomastic evidence. Tigay (1987) himself notes that "onomastic evidence may not give a complete picture of the gods worshiped in a society… (p. 171). Furthermore, the ambiguity of the word *'il* predicates against its usefulness as a clear indicator of the shape of the Ammonite cult: it can be the proper name 'Il (or 'El), but it can simply be the appellative of deity, meaning "god."

[819] A caution: although the use of the name Qaus as an element in personal names is epigraphically attested from the eighth century onward (a lengthy list of these names is available in Bartlett 1989: 204-207), evidence for the actual worship of Qaus is not found until much later, in first century BCE Nabatean inscriptions. Cf. Bienkowski 1990b: 141 and B. Becking 1992: 819. Indeed, while there is some indication that Qaus can be identified as the deity of the royal line at Buseirah (i.e. the fact that two kings of Edom

difficult (and perhaps impossible) to draw overarching conclusions about the shape of the cult from the epigraphic evidence of such theophoric elements, it can be at least conjectured that this phenomenon demonstrates the integration of regional or state religion with everyday practices.[821]

Other inscriptions from Samaria, the Transjordan, and other regions of the southern Levant clearly exploit the symbolic, transformative quality of writing. Included here is an unprovenanced seal now considered to be Ammonite that makes a reference to a vow made away from home to a goddess and fulfilled in Sidon. The seal reads "[PN, son of ?] Adinadab, who vowed to *'št* in Sidon. May she bless him," or "[Seal which?] Adinadab vowed to *št* in Sidon. May she bless him."[822] As Parker writes, "the seal itself is the fulfillment, as indicated by the final wish for a blessing."[823] On every document that the owner seals, he stamps his testimony to the goddess's response to his vow. Abecedary seals,[824] most if not all of which come from Ammon,[825] may have served some sort of magical purpose (or conversely, functioned as trial pieces). The seals contain the first four, five, eight, ten and eleven letters of the alphabet. No hypothesis exists as to why all these seals probably belong to only one "national" group.

A very unusual type of inscription that appears to span the line between a legal document and a cultic one is the *marzeah* papyrus. The publishers of this inscription date

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have names compounded with this theophoric element), the limited data cannot permit the conclusion that Qaus was a "state" god of Edom or the head of a pantheon (Bienkowski 2002: 481).

[820] Joffe 2002: 449-450.

[821] Experts have also tried to make the case for the development of different sets of iconographic repertoires (as exhibited primarily on seals and seal impressions) associated with the different workshops of each state. While subtle differences in the iconography of seals and sculpture in these polities have been observed, the heavily Egyptian character of the iconography as well as the use of common motifs such as winged scarabs and griffins on southern Levantine seals reveals that the emergent elite in these states were emulating the artistic forms of Egypt via Phoenicia (B. Sass 1993: 194-256). They looked to a common set of symbols associated with elite activity and legitimization that been handed down and enhanced by the craftsmen of the city-states on the Phoenician coast.

[822] Avigad 1997: 328; no. 876.

[823] Parker 2002: 56. It is pertinent to note here five unusual seals that share blessing formulae that do not appear on other seals (Avigad 1997: 267-8; nos. 717, 718, 720, 722, 723). The seals are inscribed in the Phoenician script of the late eighth century but bear personal names originating in Asia Minor, probably in Cilicia (where the use of Phoenician script and language in the ninth and eighth centuries is already attested). The owners of these seals are typically described as *hbrk*, "the blessed," which may be related to the expression *hbrk b'l*, "the blessed of Baal," found in the Karatepe inscription (*KAI* 26:1).

[824] Abecedary seals feature letters of the alphabet, as opposed to the typical formulation of personal name + patronym (and sometimes, + title).

[825] All abecedary seals that can be classified with certainty are Ammonite, and those that cannot are either Aramaic or Ammonite (Avigad 1997: 366).

it to the late seventh or early sixth century BCE and believe it to have been written in "a Moabite dialect somewhat different from that of Mesha's stele."[826] Parker has aptly described the *marzeah* papyrus as "a legal record of a divine decision on a case," because it "records a divine judgment concerning ownership of a *marzeah* (a voluntary association with its own building), its millstones, and its house."[827] The papyrus is particularly noteworthy for the fact that it expresses on a less grandiose scale a similar theology to that exhibited in the Amman Citadel Inscription, wherein a deity issues directions and promises about a building.

Other types of inscriptions exploiting the numinous power of writing in the southern Levant include the numerous votive and dedicatory inscriptions from Tel Miqne (Ekron) in Philistia[828] and from Phoenicia.[829] From Iron II period Israel comes a rare jar fragment with the letters *lyw* incised on it found at Megiddo as well as a bowl rim from Samaria with the incised letters *lyh*: these could be votive inscriptions characterizing the vessels as devoted to Yahweh.[830] And finally there are the famous dedicatory and votive inscriptions on objects from the site of Kuntillet 'Ajrud in Sinai (early eighth century

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[826] Bordreuil and Pardee 1990: 63. Bordreuil and Pardee are careful not to hastily identify it with one of the "national" scripts, as it "does not correspond entirely to any of the known systems" (p. 61).

[827] Parker 2002: 55.

[828] Mention has already been made of the royal dedicatory inscription from Tel Miqne that mentions five rulers of the city in five lines, among whom is Achish/Ikausu the son of Padi, who is known from Assyrian sources and who built the temple to his goddess (see above, p. 237). Cf. Gitin, *et al*. 1997: 1-16; Gitin 2003: 286 and 1998: 173. Gitin and Cogan have reported on a new type of dedicatory inscription from a clearly cultic context found in one of the southern side rooms of the temple at Ekron: the inscription, incised on the side of a storage jar and dated to the early seventh century BCE, consists of two words, *lb'l wlpdy* ("for Ba'al and for Padi"). See Gitin and Cogan 1999: 192-202; cf. Gitin 2003: 279-295. This is the first example of a West Semitic inscription joining a god and a king in a single dedication. Gitin and Cogan also note that six dedicatory cultic inscriptions found in the Temple Auxiliary Complex 654 at Ekron were written on this type of jar (which served primarily as a vessel for transporting oil). These storage-jar inscriptions consist of single words suggesting a cultic function for the jars, such as *qdš* ("holy"), *l'šrt* ("for [the goddess] 'Ashtart"), and *lmkm* (which in Phoenician and occasionally in Hebrew means "for the shrine") (Gitin 2003: 289).

[829] Most of the dedicatory and votive inscriptions from the region of Phoenicia or the territories within its cultural ambit typically make mention of a pair of deities, a male god and a goddess. While many of these types of inscriptions date to the Persian period, there are several that date earlier, to the Iron II period. These include a dedication to Ba'al Lebanon by the governor of Carthage in Cyprus during the reign of Hiram II of Tyre, dated ca. 750 BCE (*KAI* 31). (The Tyrian inscriptions are not from the city itself but from its dependencies or environs.) From the seventh or early sixth century, an inscription on an ivory plaque from Sarepta commemorates a statue that was made for the goddess Tannit-Astarte (*ltnt 'štrt*) (Peckham 1987: 80). This inscription was found in a small shrine of the city's industrial area. It has been compared to the seventh century inscription in Phoenician engraved on the ivory lid of a box found in 1926 at Ur that likewise consists of a dedication to a female deity, in this case Ashtart (M. Guzzo 1990: 58-66).

[830] Tigay 1987: 172 and note 76. The Samaria inscription uses the short form of the divine name, "Yah."

BCE), such as the large stone bowl that has on its rim the name of its donor followed by the formula, "May he be blessed by Yahweh" (*brk h' lyhw*). Although the site of Kuntillet ʿAjrud is located in close proximity to Judah, the influence of Israel on the site is indisputable.[831] The implications of the inscriptions discovered at this site will be examined further in the next chapter on writing and literacy in Judah. For now, it is worth noting that these texts, in contrast to the highly pragmatic and documentary use of writing represented by the Samaria ostraca, testify to the cultic and even magical use of writing within the orbit of Israel and Judah.

It is the phenomenon exhibited at Kuntillet ʿAjrud of a small shrine or cultic center existing within the context of a larger site engaged in a more pragmatic function that is worth exploring at this juncture. Indeed, small, single-room shrines provide the most obvious evidence for cultic activity in the Iron Age (in contrast with the Late Bronze Age).[832] This pattern, seen in Judah and the Negev region,[833] seems to hold true for Moab and Ammon as well. Excavators at Khirbat al-Mudayna ath-Thamad within the territory of Moab found just such a shrine, containing plastered benches and limestone altars, including an elaborate inscribed incense burner.[834] While no Ammonite temples have been unearthed, small shrines or cultic corners were discovered at ʿUmayri and perhaps at the possible palace at Rabbath-Ammon.[835]

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[831] See n. 614 on p. 201 above.

[832] A possible exception is the public building uncovered in Area A at Buseirah, in Edom. This building has been tentatively identified as a temple: based on the excavations conducted by Bennett (1971-1980), Bienkowski (2002) has suggested that the north-east wing of this building contained a possible purification room and steps leading to a long narrow "cella" (p. 475).

[833] For a lengthy discussion of Kuntillet Ajrud and Horvat Qitmit as wayside cult places in isolated locales, and for a comparison of these sites with Deir ʿAlla, see the following chapter (Ch. 5).

[834] Daviau and Steiner 2000: 1-21. The sanctuary building itself (Building 149) is described by the excavators as a "local sanctuary" rather than a temple because it had no "direct access entry." Along with the three limestone altars, one of which was painted and one inscribed, the excavation team found two limestone pegs and a number of other objects that could be interpreted as designed for cultic use (female figurines, oil lamps, etc.) in the debris of the sanctuary building. In the adjacent courtyard (Courtyard 150) were unearthed 2000+ animal bones with cut marks – a clear sign of cultic activities. The text is written in a script and dialect related to those of the Mesha inscriptions, but not identical: *mqtr 'š 'ś 'lšm' | lysp bt 'wt* ("the incense altar that Elishama made for YSP, the daughter of 'WT") (translation by Dion in Daviau and Steiner 2000: 11).

[835] Herr 1999: 226; cf. Herr 1997: 172. The evidence from ʿUmayri includes a standing stone with a basin at the entrance to the settlement (see Stern 2001: 248 and Najjar 1992: 529-531). The identification of the remains of an "Ammonite Temple" at the Amman Citadel by its excavator is rather tenuous (Najjar 1992: 529-531, as reported in an article on archaeology in Jordan by B. de Vries 1992: 503-542). Najjar writes that "although there was no direct evidence for the function of the building discovered to the east of the Roman temple … the nature of the finds suggests that the building may have served a special cultic

It is curious that Iron Age Transjordanian archaeological contexts have produced little evidence of a temple and its paraphernalia; neither is there unambiguous evidence for the presence of "state-level" cultic practice and functionaries.[836] On the basis of the references made to national or regional deities in the Ammonite and Moabite monumental inscriptions, however, it would seem probable that larger buildings or cultic sites dedicated to the worship and rituals of these gods must have existed in the primary urban centers. Indeed, Mesha specifically mentions building temples in the MI (line 30) and a high place (*bamah*) for Kemosh in Qarhō (probably a citadel within Dhiban), the dedication of which provides the motivation for composing and erecting the inscription in lines 3-4.[837]

The site of Tel Deir 'Alla in the central Jordan Valley represents a quite intriguing example of the phenomenon of a settlement dedicated seemingly to practical functions, yet nonetheless enclosing a small chamber possessing a clear cultic character, in the form of inscriptions on plaster detailing a vision of the "seer" Balaam (henceforth DAPT). The presence of a sanctuary at Deir 'Alla was not a new development in the history of the site: during the previous Late Bronze Age, a temple complex had existed on the site; the phase M complex in which the DAPT was found during the 1967 excavations to enlarge the area of the LB temple complex excavated in 1964.[838] Dating to the early Iron II period, the phase M complex (ninth-early eighth century BCE) clearly had practical functions: scattered all over the excavated area were signs of household activities; several rooms were used for storage (1, 2, 13-15, and 17) as well as weaving and spinning activities (2, 3, 14, 15, and 17).

In addition to the practical functions of the complex, however, it also had a religious one: this is indicated not only by the presence of the Balaam text, but by the discovery of a number of other unusual objects, such as an outsize jar (room 15), a stone with the inscription *'bn shr'*' = "stone of Shar'a'" (room 2), a jug with the inscription *zy shr'*' = "of Shar'a'" (room 4), a so-called libation vessel (room 4), and an outsize

community function." Unfortunately, he does not describe these finds at all; they are depicted in figure 26 of this article and appear to consist primarily of oil lamps and fine pottery.

[836] See Aufrecht (1999b: 155) for this observation.

[837] Routledge 2004: 147 and note 29.

[838] Vilders 1992: 187. The LB sanctuary was surrounded by "treasuries" containing the pottery and other items used in the sanctuary and service rooms (van der Steen 1997: 81).

loomweight (room 2). M. Vilders has compared the situation found at Deir 'Alla of store rooms and workshops belonging to a central administration building or sanctuary to the complex of rooms found at Beth Shean Upper Level V, an "Israelite store city" that was destroyed around 800 BCE. Both complexes do *not* show "a regular pattern of houses or dwellings as one would expect to find in a village."[839] She agrees with the interpretation of the excavator that the phase M complex at Deir 'Alla represents "a complex of workrooms belonging to a cultic centre."[840]

The texts of Deir 'Alla survived as plaster fragments in the debris near the wall on which they had been inscribed in the early eighth century in black and red ink. Unlike most Northwest Semitic Iron Age inscriptions, the Deir 'Alla inscription is quite clearly a literary text. The scribe appears not only to have copied the text of his model manuscript, but also the rubrics of the original literary work. The text arguably bears witness to the presence of a literary tradition, apparently local, which survived the vicissitudes of the Iron I period.[841] It also points to the on-going activity of some sort of scribal culture, seemingly cultic or religious in aspect, a culture that existed even before the establishment of centralized administrative apparatuses in the Transjordan.[842] Moreover, the crafting of the DAPT in conformity with the conventions of ancient Canaanite prosody points to the relatively high level of scribal sophistication in the Levantine region.[843]

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[839] Vilders 1992: 190.

[840] *Ibid*, 191. Cf J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij 1976: 13; M. Ibrahaim and G. van der Kooij 1991: 20-22.

[841] Cf. M. Weippert 1991: 151-184.

[842] Cf. E. Puech (1991: 236), who suggests that the "guild" of scribes responsible for maintaining this local literary tradition was attached to the temple of Penuel (= Deir 'Alla).

[843] The language of the Tel Deir 'Alla plaster texts has been debated repeatedly ever since they were discovered, because it resists classification as Aramaic or Canaanite in categorical terms (see, for example, the discussions of the language of the DAPT found in Pardee 1991: 100-105, G. Davies 1991b: 143-148, van der Kooij 1991: 239-262). Given the complexity of the population of the mid-Jordan valley – as seen in the archaeology, epigraphy, and history of the region – the language of the DAPT is probably one of range of local dialects. As such, it fits well into its geographical context, since Aram-Damascus to the north exerted a considerable degree of political and cultural influence over northern and central Jordan until the fall of Damascus in 732 BCE. This text could simply be classified, therefore, as written in a Deir 'Alla dialect and described as both archaic and literary (cf. McCarter 1991: 87-99; Parker 2002: 46; J. Hackett 1984).

This early Iron II scribal culture appears to have been the inheritor of the LB Age Canaanite literary tradition, such as is found at Ugarit.[844] For example, the three poetic strophes of "Combination I"[845] appear to be "crafted in conformity with the conventions of ancient (Bronze Age) Canaanite prosody exemplified by Ugaritic poetry."[846] The scribal craft and knowledge such as is reflected in the DAPT very likely represents the type of cultural resource from which the emerging elite of the southern Levant drew in their efforts to claim hegemony over certain territories.[847] For example, the explicit mention of at least two oracles in the stelae of Zakkur and Mesha reveals how effectively the royal propaganda of the Levant made use of prophetic oracles that had previously been written down.[848] The discovery of the plaster inscription indicates that Deir 'Alla represented a small site of intellectual activity; its archaeological context, unfortunately, is not very forthcoming regarding the site's potential association with one of the region's polities. The sanctuary and its literary productions may have operated as a locus for the resistance of one polity, such as Moab or Ammon, against another polity, such as Israel or Aram-Damascus.

Given this observation, it is highly suggestive that portions of the DAPT appear to constitute a kind of social critique. Indeed, the divine oracle described in Balaam's

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[844] B. Levine has proposed that the Deir 'Alla inscriptions "belonged to an El *repertoire*, a body of literary creativity originally composed at various centers of El worship on both sides of the Jordan" (1991: 58).

[845] "Combination I" consists of a prose introduction (ll. 1-6a), followed by three poetic strophes of unequal length (ll. 6b-9a; 9b-13a; and 13b-16).

[846] Margalit 1994: 282. Among these conventions (according to Margalit) is the use of ornthic imagery in Strophe I, animal imagery in Strophe II, and "name-midrash" in Strophe III. There is also the inscription's possible thematic and literary affinity to the Ugaritic *Aqht* text; here Margalit (pp. 287-288) compares the mythological theme of a hero(ine)'s "Descent to the Netherworld" with what he terms the prophet Balaam's "Report from the Netherworld" in his reconstruction of the poorly preserved Combination II. Margalit's reconstruction of the poorly preserved "Combination II" reveals its "striking similarity (as well as notable differences) to a famous passage from the *Gilgamesh* epic, viz., the seduction of Enkidu" (p. 283), particularly as it was adapted in Ugaritic literature to describe the account of the descent of the youth *Aqht*, murdered by the goddess Anat and her Sutean henchmen (KTU 1.19.I.11-14; 17). Margalit contends that the second part of DAPT is therefore "strongly reminiscent of Ugaritic epic poetry "both in its epic-poetic form and in its heavily mythological character" (p. 297).

[847] For example, see Margalit's observations (p. 174) regarding the presence of "alliterative" features in the Mesha Inscription that connects it with the Old Canaanite tradition and with the prosody of other ninth and early eighth century Northwest Semitic inscriptions (such as the Karak Fragment, the Tel Dan inscription, the Amman Citadel inscription, and the Tel Fekheriyeh inscription).

[848] Cf. A. Lemaire 1997: 187. While the "prophets" who issued the oracles referenced in these inscriptions were themselves not necessarily literate, their oracles (only if favorable to the king?) apparently were gathered by the royal scribes and perhaps put down in written form. Lemaire speculates that the scribes would have selected and re-used extracts from this initial chronicling of prophetic oracles in the redaction of royal inscriptions.

vision apparently calls for some kind of negative judgment being issued by the divine assembly. Strophe II (of Combination I) in particular seems to contain some kind of social critique of scholastic and cultic institutions: as described concisely by Margalit, "Pupils are rebuked for their mischief-making, their (male) teachers for their asininity, and the (female) cultic personnel for their sexual promiscuity."[849] The first part (Combination I) of the text therefore possesses as its main theme an "oracle of doom" and may be categorized as a "prophetic" text[850]; as such it exhibits a generic affinity to the collection of Old Testament prophecies designated "oracles-against-the-nations" (Jeremiah 46-51, Ezekiel 38-39, Isaiah 13, and Joel).

It is unclear who exactly were the targets of this mid-ninth century community in central Transjordan (apparently) under the religious leadership of Balaam-son-of-B'r. Margalit believes the social critique of the DAPT to have been aimed at the inhabitants of Israel (Samaria), the "trend-setting neighbors and political overlords" of this community.[851] If this is indeed the case, then the critique and oracles of the DAPT could conceivably constitute a state-driven construction created to justify resistance against a "foreign" polity.

Conclusion

As has been described in the previous chapter, the territory of LB Canaan, falling within the compass of the Egyptian Empire, was comprised of "little centers of power hung like constellations."[852] Territories such as Ammon, Samaria, and Moab were simply geographic entities. The exertion of hegemony by the elites dwelling in the major centers of LB Canaan relied locally on ritual display to reproduce their power and status. On a global level, their maintenance of scribal bureaucracies in order to correspond with the scions of Egypt aided them in their efforts at legitimization. Over the course of the Iron Age, however, and for the first time in the history of Canaan (both in the Cis- and Transjordan), the old urban order appears to have been permanently disrupted: the city-

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[849] Margalit 1994: 282.
[850] It is interesting that the title that is given to Balaam, *'š hzh 'lhn*, "man who sees the gods" (i.e. essentially a "seer"), is similar to that given to those *hzyn* ("seers") who have issued the prophetic oracles referenced on the Stela of Zakkur.
[851] *Op cit.*
[852] For this descriptive turn of phrase, see Routledge 2004: 86.

state did not regenerate to reassert its usual dominance over the small rural kinship groups. Furthermore, the Iron Age (particularly Iron II) states extracted their cultural resources more directly from the "internal dynamics" of their local communities in order to articulate a claim of unity and territoriality. Among the cultural resources already accessible in local forms of social life was writing. Through the use of writing, the kin-based elements that had probably always been present in these societies came to provide powerful metaphors for kingship and rule (as evident in the royal inscriptions) as well as a prestigious means of expressing self-identity (as in personal seals).

As we have seen, the use of writing in Moab and Ammon for monumental, royal inscriptions illustrates a curious, non-classic feature of the Transjordanian polities: this is that the assertion of kingship over a territory and the expression of a core historical identity seem to have emerged at least a century before the state itself. In other words, notwithstanding the appearance of late ninth and early eighth century BCE monumental inscriptions in Ammon and Moab making nationalist claims and inscriptional evidence that local dynasties of elites had begun asserting themselves as rulers in the various centers of the southern Levant, there is little evidence that anything resembling a centralized administrative apparatus or a multi-tiered settlement hierarchy had appeared in any of the regions of the southern Levant until the late eighth century BCE *at the earliest* (with the notable exception of Israel).

In the case of the MI, the message of Mesha ironically "did not become the reality 'on the ground'" in Moab until the seventh century BCE.[853] As this chapter has shown, most of the archaeological evidence for the formation of the Moabite state and for any degree of urbanization in the Moabite region dates to the seventh and sixth centuries, and not to the ninth century, the date of the stela's production. Neither did the territory of Ammon, whose king received from the god Milkom commands and assurances of victory and prosperity in the Amman Citadel inscription, really begin to develop or prosper economically until the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. As for the territory of Edom (which has to date yielded no royal inscriptions), it is apparent that this polity achieved no more than a loose kind of political cohesion during the seventh and sixth centuries. Only in the kingdom of Israel does the evidence suggest the presence of a centralized

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[853] Routledge 1997: 140.

administration and a relatively complex settlement hierarchy during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE.

The linking of the field of writing with the articulation of state hegemony is suggested not only by the discovery of royal monumental inscriptions from the regions of Moab and Ammon (and probably Israel) mentioned again above, but also by the expanding number and variety of epigraphic finds dating to the last 150-200 years of the Iron II period (and to the ninth-eighth centuries BCE, in the case of Israel). Routledge has succinctly expressed this development in the following way: "as the uses of writing expanded in a manner complementary to royal projects, the field of writing itself was not only coupled to state hegemony, it actually mediated (and hence made possible) particular social relations central to that hegemony (e.g., collecting taxes, fulfilling corvée labor obligations, seeking sanctioned legal decisions, etc.)."[854]

As has been seen in the previous chapter, this linking of writing to state hegemony was a process that characterized the Levantine region from as early as the Bronze Age. The Amarna Letters, for example, reflect the efforts of the ruling elite of the LB city-states to legitimize themselves and their polities on the international scene. This pattern was repeated in the Phoenician region, where royal and monumental inscriptions again attest to the use of writing as a legitimating tool by the Phoenician rulers. The scribal conventions and text types associated with this linkage, together with the development of the linear alphabet, constituted the pan-Canaanite writing tradition developed by the Phoenicians and passed on to Israel, and through that state to the Transjordan and to Judah (for the latter process, see the following chapter).

It is important to reiterate that while a dramatic increase in both the number and the variety of inscriptions does characterize the Iron II period in the southern Levant, which in turn indicates that a greater diversity of textual practices were being performed, the quantity of the inscriptions from Israel and the Transjordan is relatively few and the length of those which have been found is unfortunately brief (if compared with, for example, the copious amounts of inscriptions, many lengthy, discovered in Mesopotamia and Egypt). The near lack of inscriptions (such as letters, and in the Transjordan, archives) may be a reflection of the fact that such documents were often rendered on

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[854] Routledge 2004: 190.

perishable media such as papyrus, rather than indicating a complete absence of such writing activity in these regions.

From what can be inferred from the surviving inscriptions, writing activity largely appears to have been confined to the domain of the scribes and perhaps of the cultic functionaries, and they engaged in composing the types of inscriptions that had long been characteristic of the ancient Near Eastern world: formal, monumental inscriptions and cultic, mythological works (e.g., the Deir 'Alla plaster inscription). While the contents and stylized language of the royal inscriptions reveal the active involvement of these scribes in the hegemonizing project of the Levantine elites, the cultic installations and their attendant inscriptions at sites such as Kuntillet 'Ajrud, Khirbat al-Mudayna, and especially Deir 'Alla suggest the presence of smaller sites of power whose intellectual products could be conformed to the state's hegemonic project, and which could also function as state propaganda (e.g., the social critique encountered in the Deir 'Alla inscription) aimed at another state. As we shall see in the following chapter, this observation has important ramifications for the question of literary composition in Iron II Judah.

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Chapter 5

Writing and Literacy in Iron II Judah (ca. 925-550 BCE)

Introduction

By far the bulk of the epigraphic material coming from the southern Levant and dating to the Iron II period (ca. 925-550 BCE) has been unearthed in Judean contexts. This circumstance, due in no small measure to the particular attention lavished by archaeologists on sites in the Judean region (in contrast to the more limited number of excavations conducted in other regions of the southern Levant), has led to the tendency to view Judah as the epicenter of literate activity in the region. Underlying this assumption is the commonly held view that certain sections of the Hebrew bible (e.g., the Deuteronomistic History,[855] and several of the prophetic texts) may have experienced their genesis in Jerusalem at some point during the Iron Age (the pre-exilic period).

While it is indeed true that the data base for Iron II Judah has yielded by far the most varied and numerous attestations of writing activity in the southern Levant, the propensity to regard this record as evidence for a unique phenomenon of literacy un-witnessed either in previous periods or in the regions contemporary with Judah somewhat misses the mark. It neglects to acknowledge that Judah, like its fellow southern Levantine states, was an inheritor of a Syro-Canaanite tradition of writing whose development and legacy has been clearly traced in preceding chapters.

The penchant for focusing on the uniqueness of the literate phenomenon in Judah likewise overlooks the pivotal role of Israel (Samaria) in the transmission of the earlier

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[855] The Deuteronomistic History, or DtrH, includes the books of Deuteronomy (or Joshua) through 1 Kings 2. Most scholars follow M. Noth in accepting the essential unity of the DtrH, and many also argue that this unity reflects a unity of authorship, i.e., that Deuteronomy plus the Former Prophets was an original unit by a single author/editor (see Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 1981, which represents the first half of his work *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, originally published in German in 1943). One of the most influential literary critical theories regarding the date of the DtrH has been formulated by F.M. Cross (1973: 274-289). He suggests an initially pre-exilic (Josianic) edition (Dtr1), which was subsequently updated in the exile (Dtr2).

LB Canaanite cultural traditions, including those associated with literate productions, to Iron II Judah and the Transjordan. Israel, a greater consolidated power than Moab and equal to Aram and Phoenicia in the early Iron II period (late tenth century – ca. 800 BCE), most likely functioned as the principal bridge between the scribal centers in Phoenicia proper in the northwest and the scribal institutions of Aram in the east and of Judah and the Transjordan in the south. Recent assessments of a significant population increase in the area surrounding Jerusalem during the late eighth century BCE, and the likelihood that much of this population increase can be connected with a massive influx of Samarian refugees to Judah following Assyria's destruction of Israel in 722/1 BCE, suggest that this exodus was the primary vehicle for the transmission of Phoenician-Samarian elite concepts from Israel to Judah. This influx followed upon a period during the ninth and eighth centuries when Judah was dominated politically by the more powerful Samarian state (and very likely came under its cultural influence as well).[856]

In reality, the remarkable number and variety of inscriptions in the epigraphic record from Judah should be understood as the outcome of a particular convergence of three main circumstances: (1) the privileging of Judean sites in contemporary archaeological investigation, (2) the particular role of Judah as the direct recipient of the Samarian refugees and therefore of the Phoenician-Samarian cultural traditions, and (3) Judah's own unique process of state formation, which favored a higher degree of centralization and concomitantly a more extensive entrainment of writing in the service of the state than the contemporary processes of state formation that took place in the Transjordan.[857] Indeed, the use of writing for state purposes is much better represented in the epigraphic record for Judah than in any other southern Levantine state. Even more so in Iron II Judah than in the Transjordanian states, writing can be seen as one of a constellation of intellectual products, including architecture, iconography, institutions and

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[856] Finkelstein and Silberman 2006: 259-285. Cf. Finkelstein 2003: 81-101 and Joffe 2002: 448. It can be inferred from the Tel Dan inscription that the Judean kings aided the Omride kings in achieving their military ambitions (whether this participation was voluntary or conscripted is impossible to say).

[857] The higher degree of centralization achieved in the Judean state than in the Transjordanian states was doubtless also due to the greater suitability of Judah's various sub-regions for producing various cash crops (i.e. wine and olive oil in the Shephelah and hill country, grain in the hill country and the Beersheba Valley) as well as the greater stability of Judah's regional environment (compared with the more tenuous climactic stability of the Transjordanian region), which facilitated agricultural intensification in service of a centralizing administration.

administrative practices, that express a meaning that came to be fixed in relation to an overarching order, the state.

Comparisons of the data from Judah with that from the Transjordanian states suggests that Judah's elite class was the most developed and that it took an extraordinarily active and effective role in selecting and articulating cultural resources by producing specific intellectual products whose meaning was fixed in relation to an overarching ethnic identity (i.e. the state of Judah). In addition to investigating the various ways in which the field of writing was entrained for state purposes, this chapter provides the opportunity to examine more intensively the identity and character of Judah's elite classes, and more specifically, those elites who held historically and culturally defined roles as producers of texts (e.g., priest, scribe, etc.). The intellectual functions of these literate individuals included but were not necessarily limited to the "leading, educating, and articulating" of state hegemony.[858] Their efforts are most clearly attested in the intellectual products from the archaeological record (namely, texts).

The analysis of the epigraphic material from Judah presented in the following pages will demonstrate, however, that not all of the uses found for writing in Judah were entrained by the state for its ideological and bureaucratic purposes: Judah's epigraphic record is noteworthy for a great variety of textual practices, some of which are not so evidently intertwined with the practices of state agents. In particular, the remarkable preponderance of graffiti found in Judah suggests that writing's symbolic, non-documentary, and cultic uses were exploited more and more frequently in non-royal, unofficial contexts. It will be proposed in the final chapter that the significant clusters of graffiti (much of it cultic and/or literary) found at several sites in Judah provides an insight into a possible literary process whereby texts critical of the state (or at the very least, not deliberately designed to function as state propaganda) could be composed within the context of smaller sites of power. While the process of state formation necessarily results in a "gathering together and subordination of smaller sites of power (family, village, temples and shrines, myths and symbols, etc.)," to varying degrees these

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[858] Routledge 2004: 31.

sites could have retained an independent existence and thereby formed loci of potential resistance.[859]

As in previous chapters, this chapter will open with an overview of the process of state formation in Judah, before then offering an analysis of the inscriptional evidence according to the different spheres of literate activity in which they fall. First, however, it is necessary briefly to address the conflicting opinions regarding the transition from the Late Iron I to the Early Iron II periods (as well as concerning the duration of the Iron IIA period), as a position taken on these issues obviously affects one's treatment of the data. For many years there has been a lack of consensus regarding the date of the Iron I-Iron II transition, with proponents of the "High" or "Conventional Chronology" (CC) assigning this transition to ca. 1000 BCE, and advocates of the "Low Chronology" (LC) placing it in the late tenth century (ca. 925 BCE).[860] The transition is typically connected with the introduction of new pottery types and to a new style of surface treatment of the vessels, characterized by red-slip and hand-burnished ware. Proponents of the CC assign this pottery a date in the tenth century, and its duration is attributed to the so-called "United Monarchy."[861] The primary advocate of the LC likewise has relied on pottery to make his case: Finkelstein has argued that the Philistine Bichrome ware should be re-dated to a period spanning ca. 1100 to the early-to-mid tenth century BCE (instead of to the late twelfth century). This means that the first strata which post-date the Philistine Bichrome should be placed in the mid-to-late tenth century, and implies that the Iron II period also began at that point (rather than ca. 1000 BCE).[862]

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[859] Routledge 2004: 38.

[860] There is an extensive bibliography centering on this debate; for a summary of the traditional (CC) view, see A. Mazar 1990: 368-402; for the current debate, see Finkelstein 1996; 1998; 1999; 2003 (LC) versus A. Ben-Tor and D. Ben-Ami 1998; Ben-Tor 2000; Mazar 1997; 2003 (CC). The debate has continued to become ever more reliant on the data from C-14 dating; see the recently published volume, *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating* (T.E. Levy and T. Higham 2005), which supports the conventional chronology as well as a recent article by Finkelstein and Piasetzky (2006b: 373-386), which highlights what they perceive as the methodological problems in this volume and argues that a new interpretation of the results set forth in the volume actually supports the LC system.

[861] Holladay 1990: 23-70 and Mazar 1998: 368-378. The specific association of this red-slipped, hand-burnished ware with the tenth century has been disproved by O. Zimhoni (1997), on the basis of her observations of the pottery at Lachish Level IV (ninth century). According to Zimhoni, the pottery repertoires from Lachish and two other sites providing safe stratigraphy (Tel Arad and Tel Beersheba) show that the duration of this pottery must be extended well beyond the tenth century until the ninth and early eighth century BCE.

[862] See in particular Finkelstein 1996: 177-187, especially p. 180.

More recently, Herzog and Singer-Avitz have offered a new chronology of the Iron Age IIA (IAIIA) period that attempts to bridge these two opposing views. They assign the IAIIA to a longer period (mid-tenth to ca. 760 or 750 BCE) than the other two chronologies (i.e. 150-200 years, rather than 100-125 years), and break the period into two sub-phases related to a "hitherto unnoticed subdivision of the pottery assemblages of the Early and Late IAIIA" in Judah and the south.[863] Their primary anchor for the end of the Iron IIA period is the earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1 (which they date to a period between 780 and 740 BCE), and their anchor for the beginning of the Iron IIA is the association of Arad XII with Sheshonq I's campaign (mid-tenth century). Both of these chronological anchors have since come under attack by Fantalkin and Finkelstein, who point out that there is no reason to see the earthquake as the cause of the transition from the Iron IIA to the Iron IIB, and who cite data from C-14 results and pottery repertoires from the north indicating that the transition from the Iron IIA to the Iron IIB probably took place around 800 BCE.[864] C-14 investigations have also demonstrated an Iron I to Iron IIA transition in the late tenth century in the north, following the mid-tenth century destruction of the Late Iron I "New Canaan" system in the northern valleys.[865]

Fantalkin and Finkelstein therefore propose lowering the beginning of the Early Iron IIA and raising the end of the Late Iron IIA to obtain an Iron IIA period of ca. 125 years, from ca. 925 to ca. 800 BCE. Their chronology is supported by the recent publication of the C-14 results for four Iron Age destruction layers, which have anchored the relative sequences in the highlands and the northern valleys into an absolute dating system.[866] This study appears to confirm Finkelstein's assertion that the transition from the Iron I to the Iron IIA must be placed in the second half of the tenth century BCE (between 925 and 905 BCE).[867] In the following analysis of the social-political

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[863] Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 230.
[864] Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006: 18-42; cf. Finkelstein and Piasetzky 2006a: 57. Fantalkin and Finkelstein do not have any quibble with Herzog and Singer-Avitz's observations regarding the two stratigraphic and ceramic Iron IIA phases in Judah and the south, however.
[865] E. Boaretto, *et al.* 2005: 39-55. Fantalkin and Finkelstein also argue against linking the Sheshonq I campaign and the abandonment of the Tel Masos settlement system, including Arad XII, and instead set the date for the beginning of the Iron IIA in the south to the late tenth century BCE.
[866] Finkelstein and Piasetzky 2006a: 45-61.
[867] In a second article published in the same year (2006b: 373-386), Finkelstein and Piasetzky maintain that their chronology likely applies to the south as well as the north (p. 384). They do note, however, that the

developments that took place in Judah during the Iron II period, the conclusion of Fantalkin and Finkelstein that the Iron IIA spans a period from ca. 925 to ca. 800 BCE is accepted.

The Social-Political Landscape of Judah during the Ninth—Early Sixth Centuries BCE

In the Judean region, the ninth century marked a transitional phase between the sparsely settled tenth century and the densely settled eighth century. This transitional phase is most strikingly represented in the Shephelah and the Beersheba Valley (rather than in the Judean hill country), where the first signs of a more organized settlement pattern ostensibly directed by a centralizing force have been found. In the first part of the Iron IIA (late tenth century BCE), rural settlements, organized in an "enclosed settlement" pattern, characterized these two regions;[868] by the latter part of the Iron Age IIA (ca. 800 BCE), the Shephelah and the Beersheba Valley had come to feature a dramatically different occupational pattern. The late Iron Age IIA (late ninth century) settlements of Lachish Level IV, Arad Stratum XI and Beersheba Strata VI-IV (Stratum VI being a preparatory phase for the Stratum V city) are fortified and show evidence of other significant building activities, such as water supply systems.[869] Herzog and Singer-Avitz voice the general consensus that this development points to "the emergence of a central government with a high degree of investment of resources in planning and in the construction of military and administrative structures."[870]

In the hill country of Judah, Jerusalem was only a minor settlement from the twelfth through much of the ninth century; even in the late Iron Age IIA period (late ninth

south has not provided any C-14 dates and that it is therefore difficult to synchronize its chronology with other parts of the country (cf. Finkelstein and Piasetzky 2006a: 57).

[868] The exception to this rule is Tel Masos, which apparently occupied a prominent position in the Beersheba Valley originating from its role in Iron Age I (Stratum III), when it functioned as an important trading post for the copper mined in Feinan in the Arava. By contrast, all other early Iron Age IIA settlements appear to have lacked fortifications and administrative buildings; this state of affairs apparently indicates a "low level of social complexity" and the presence of "un-stratified communities" (Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 227).

[869] Herzog 1994: 122-149; Finkelstein 2003: 81-101; Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 220-224, 228. Conversely, the large number of rural settlements that had existed in the early Iron Age IIA in the Beersheba Valley, in the Negev Highlands, and in the Shephelah largely disappeared (Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 232).

[870] Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 228. As evidence for the emergence of a political entity in southern Palestine during the ninth century, note too the probable reference to the "House of David" dynasty in the mid-ninth century Tel Dan inscription, and the possible mention of this same dynasty in the Mesha Stela (also mid-ninth century BCE).

century), the city appears to have been restricted to the ridge of the City of David (covering an area of ca. 6 hectares), and to have gone unfortified until the late eighth century.[871] By ca. 800 BCE, there is some evidence for public building activity in Jerusalem: the famous "stepped stone structure" may date to this period,[872] as well as the large building recently unearthed in the City of David, above and slightly to the north of the stepped stone structure.[873] Still, not a single site in the hill country features a fully urban and fortified city during the early Iron II period (late tenth down to ca. 800 BCE),[874] and a recent review of data from excavated sites in the hill country reveals an actual decline in the number of settlements in the Iron Age IIA.[875]

In recent years, two important interpretations of this Iron Age IIA data have appeared. Finkelstein (occasionally accompanied by either Fantalkin or Silberman) believes the settlement developments that took place in the Beersheba Valley and a bit later in the Shephelah to be examples of early Judean expansion and therefore initial steps in the state-formation of a Judean state centered on Jerusalem and the Judean hill country.[876] He understands the construction of Beersheba V and Arad XI in the late ninth century as representing "an effort by Judah, under the auspices of the Omrides, to take control over the trade routes in the Beersheba Valley after the decline of the Tel Masos chiefdom."[877] Renewed involvement by Israel in the south is also evident in the strong

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[871] Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 217. For the lack of a pre-late eighth century defense system, see D. Ussishkin 2003: 103-115.

[872] Finkelstein 2003: 84-86. Although both the foundation date and form of the monumental structure for which the stepped stone structure served as a basis/foundation is hotly debated, there is a consensus it existed during the early part of Iron Age II and that it was a large monumental building of "royal" character. For the debate regarding the stepped-stone structure, see M. Steiner 1993: 585-588 and 2003: 347-363 versus J. Cahill and D. Tarler 1993: 625-626 and Cahill 2003: 13-80.

[873] E. Mazar 2006: 16-27, 70; cf. Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006: 32.

[874] Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 220.

[875] Faust 2003a: 147-161. Faust's review appears to contradict the results of the survey of the Judean Highlands conducted by A. Ofer (2001: 14-37), who argued for an increase in settlement during this phase (but see the critique of the methodology of Ofer's survey in Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 220). The over-all picture of the Judean hill-country agrees with the situation in the excavated sites: it was relatively empty (Finkelstein 2003: 83).

[876] Finkelstein 2003: 81-101; Finkelstein and Silberman 2006: 259-285; Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006: 18-42. According to Fantalkin and Finkelstien, the first fortified administrative center at Tel Beersheba (Stratum V) and at Arad (Stratum XI) during the late Iron IIA replaced the Tel Masos chiefdom system.

[877] Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006: 29. Cf. Finkelstein 2003: 99 and especially Finkelstein's study (1995) of the Iron II trade networks in the Negev and Sinai (particularly pp. 139-153). Fantalkin and Finkelstein also note that "the construction of two Omride forts in Ataroth and Jahaz in northern Moab, referred to in the Mesha Inscription, should possibly be seen as part of the same effort by the Northern Kingdom to exert its influence in the south" (pp. 29-30).

northern features of the material culture and inscriptions of Kuntillet 'Ajrud, and in the possible association of Israel with transportation of Egyptian horses to Assyria.[878] This renewed prosperity and territorial expansion of the kingdom of Israel is to be connected with its identity as a client state of the Assyrian empire.

Herzog and Singer-Avitz have recently offered a new interpretation of the data that calls for a reinterpretation of the center of Judah during the Iron Age IIA period (late tenth down to ca. 800 BCE).[879] Noting the disparity in settlement activity between the Judean hill country on the one hand and the Shephelah foothills and Beersheba Valley to the west and south on the other hand, they argue that the process of the socio-economic "crystallization" of the monarchy actually began in the latter regions, rather than in the former. They therefore posit that the emergence of administrative centers in the Shephelah (at Lachish) and Beersheba Valley (at Beersheba and Arad) represented the "demographic, economic, political and military centre of the emerging state" and not the Judean Hills region (Jerusalem and Hebron) during the Iron Age IIA period.[880] The apparent concern for military protection exhibited by these fortified settlements suggests to Herzog and Singer-Avitz that "the cultural shift resulted from stressful conditions rather than from prosperity"; they go on to conjecture that the stressful conditions underlying this shift were "the political-military raid by the Egyptians and the fluctuations of environmental conditions."[881] Herzog and Singer-Avitz describe this as a process in which a "life-saving managerial elite" responded to these stressful conditions

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[878] Fantalkin and Finkelstein 2006: 32. For the northern features of Kuntillet 'Ajrud, see P. Beck 1982:3-68 and 2002: 217-218; and A. Soumeka 2002: 80-98. For the possible role of Israel as a transporter of horses from Egypt to Assyria, see D. Cantrell and I. Finkelstein (forthcoming).

[879] Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 268-277.

[880] *Ibid*, 226. This may cast a new light on the destruction of sites in the Shephelah (including Lachish) and the Beersheba Valley by Sennacherib in 701 BCE. It has long been wondered at that Jerusalem also did not come under the wrath of the Assyrians, as there are no destruction levels dating to this period at the various excavated areas in Jerusalem. Were the Shephelah sites targeted because they were perhaps seen as the primary administrative centers in Judah by the Assyrians, even still in the late eighth century BCE? Could it be that it was this Assyrian-waged destruction that removed them as the competitors for Jerusalem and enabled the elites of Jerusalem to assert the primacy of Jerusalem?

[881] *Ibid*, 232. The Egyptian raid referred to by Herzog and Singer-Avitz is the Shishak (Shoshenq) campaign, to which has been attributed the destruction of several independent polities such as the Jezreel Valley polity around Megiddo, a Central Highland polity around Gibeon and a Desert polity around Tel Masos (Finkelstein 2002: 109-135; cf. Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 232-233). Environmental instability is the second possible catalyst for the cultural shift, and there is evidence for the occurrence of environmental fluctuations contributing to a shortage of agricultural products, particularly in the southern semi-arid regions (although this evidence cannot be dated to a precise point in time). For a summary of this evidence, see Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 234.

in the lowlands of Judah, (with Lachish playing a central role), and also in the Beersheba Valley.[882]

Their argument for relocating the "heart of the emerging monarchy" in the lower land regions during the Iron Age IIA (late tenth down to ca. 800 BCE) rather than in the hill country is a compelling one.[883] This re-interpretation does not however negate the probability that the building activity in the Shephelah and Beersheba Valley, and the rise of a "managerial elite" in these regions, took place under the diplomatic and military domination of the Omrides in Samaria (as Finkelstein suggests). Domination by a more powerful northern polity provides a convincing explanation for the organization of the Judean region during the ninth and early eighth centuries around a settlement system comprised of Lachish (a fortress situated on the southeast frontier facing Egypt), Arad and other desert fortresses, and small towns like Beersheba with storehouse complexes, which were installed to guard the borders and to function as central places for society and its economy.[884]

As far as evidence for inscriptions during the ninth and first half of the eighth century is concerned, in none of these regions of Judah is there much evidence for any meaningful scribal activity. While areas to the east and north-east of Judah have yielded some lengthy inscriptions dating from the mid-ninth to the early eighth centuries (e.g., the Mesha Stela, the Amman Citadel Inscription, the Deir 'Alla plaster texts, and the Tel Dan inscription), in Judah itself the majority of mundane inscriptions date to the eighth century and later, and evidence for fuller texts comes only from the last quarter of the eighth century. It is possible (as some have argued) that the low quantity of inscriptions

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[882] *Ibid*, 235.

[883] This argument is rendered even more persuasive by the fact that (as noted by Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004: 235-236), the hillside and lowland regions are "pointedly more urbane than the highlands," and that the Shephelah has often filled a central role in the region – earlier during the Early Bronze Age II-III (dominance of Tel Yarmuth), then during the MB Age IIB (when Lachish served a similar capacity), and later when Ramla served as the Umayyad and Abbasid capital of the Province of Palestine (*Jund Filistin*). Also suggestive in this regard is the existence of a pottery production tradition established in the Shephelah in the ninth and early eighth century and represented by the "pre-*lmlk* jars" (I. Shai and A. Maeir 2003: 108-123); this tradition was apparently taken over by the Judean royal administration in the late eighth century, as evidenced by the appearance of the *lmlk* jars bearing the royal seals of Judah's ruling dynasty.

[884] Control of the southern desert trade networks was clearly not the sole goal of the nascent Judean administration; the emphasis on storage evident at many Judean sites throughout the entire Iron II period reflects the concern that times of agricultural stress could lead to the movement of population and the disintegration of the state. Cf. Finkelstein 1988; Herr 1997: 124-125; Holladay 1995: 391-393, and Joffe 2002: 451.

in earlier periods can be attributed to the lack of major destructions,[885] but it is more likely that the sparse record of inscriptions simply points to the extremely limited use of writing in Judah until the late eighth century.

Nevertheless, there are a few indications that writing was beginning to be exploited as a useful tool in administrative practices. The recent discovery of late Iron IIA uninscribed bullae in the City of David indicates a growing administrative activity in Jerusalem in the first half of the eighth century BCE.[886] Ostraca found at Arad and dated to the ninth century contain hieratic numerals and signs identical to those used in contemporary Egyptian accounting systems, and provide the earliest evidence for scribal administrative activities in the Iron II period.[887] Still, the relative dearth of inscriptions dating to the ninth and the first half of the eighth century correlates with the lack of other features commonly associated during this period with a state apparatus, such as mass-produced pottery, standardized weights, and other evidence for a developed economy. One could describe the situation in Jerusalem and Judah during the ninth and first half of the eighth century as being in an interim phase between the Amarna-like conditions of the Iron I and early Iron IIA periods and the more recognizably state-like entity emerging in the region by the late eighth century.

It is not until this late period (the latter part of the eighth century) that incontrovertible evidence for Judah's transformation into a centralizing polity with an active bureaucratic apparatus, a clearly articulated settlement hierarchy, monumental building projects, and the extensive production of secondary agricultural products first emerges.[888] This development can be attributed to a number of events that shaped the nascent Judean state, including the dissolution of Israel by the Assyrians in 722/721 BCE

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[885] Cf. Davies 2002: 278 and Millard 1998: 36-37.

[886] R. Reich, E. Shuqron and O. Lernau (forthcoming). These seal impressions point to the presence of papyrus documents, perhaps collected together in an archive. Their iconography features Phoenician/Samarian motifs.

[887] Renz (1995: I: 44-46) attributes Arad Ostraca Nos. 76-79 and 81 from Stratum XI to the ninth century. These ostraca also reveal that scribes in southern Palestine had begun adopting a concept of numerals and accounting abbreviations from Egyptian scribes that continued to be used until the end of the Judean monarchy (see Schniedewind 2003: 63).

[888] D. Jamieson-Drake was the first historian fully to articulate this view, in his influential monograph *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah* (1991). His sketch of Judah as a small rudimentary polity during the Iron I and early Iron II periods, which only achieved complex administrative structures during the late monarchic period, is now generally accepted and forms the foundation upon which the socio-historical outline presented in this study is based. The bibliography of historians and archaeologists who accept his general conclusions is too extensive to cite here!

and the resulting influx of refugees (among which were likely elites) from the north, and the integration of Judah into the Assyrian economic sphere during the 730s, which enabled Judah to play an increasingly important role in the southern trade network.[889] The effect of these events on Judah and its concomitant emergence as an "ethnicizing" state manifests itself in the archaeological record in a variety of ways.

Demographically, Judah experienced a marked population growth in only a short period in the second half of the eighth century BCE: new settlements were founded in the Judean hills, the Shephelah, and the Beersheba Valley, and the total built-up area grew dramatically.[890] As for Jerusalem itself, the city reached its largest size during the period of the late eighth through seventh centuries; its built-up area expanded from the City of David to the Western Hill for the first time.[891] By the seventh century, Jerusalem had gained a seven-meter wide city wall to the west (on the Western Hill) and two walls on the eastern slope of the City of David;[892] the walled area within Jerusalem had grown to a size of about 650 dunams (65 hectares).[893] The Siloam Tunnel, connecting the Gihon spring with a pool in the southern tip of the valley between the City of David and the Western Hill, supplied water to the fortified city. At the same time, the hinterland around Jerusalem became dotted with hundreds of farmsteads; this intensively settled hinterland apparently resulted from Jerusalem's growing need for food.[894] Current scholarship connects the burgeoning of population and the expansion of Jerusalem with two

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[889] Broshi and Finkelstein 1992: 47-60; cf. Finkelstein 1995 (especially pp. 139-153) and 1994: 169-187; and Hopkins 1996: 121-139. Participation in the Assyrian dominated Arabian trade network, along the routes that led from Arabia via Edom to the Mediterranean ports, likely resulted in the settlement of the Beersheba Valley during this period, which had until then been a "sparsely settled fringe area" (Finkelstein 2003: 83).

[890] For the expansion of settlements in the southern hill country in the second half of the eighth century (as well as on the plateau to the north of Jerusalem), see Ofer 1994: 92-121 and 2001: 14-37. For a similar development in the Shephelah and in the Beersheba Valley, see Singer-Avitz 1999: 3-74; Finkelstein and Na'aman 2004: 60-79; and Herzog 1992: 247f. The Judean desert and the Negev did not experience a significant settlement wave until later, in the seventh century (Faust and Weiss 2005: 73-75).

[891] Faust 2005: 97-118, esp. 97-106; cf. Barkay 1992b: 371-372; Finkelstein 2003: 82; Reich and Shukron 2003: 211; Y. Shiloh 1989: 98.

[892] Excavators have unearthed fortifications dating to the late Iron Age II period along the western part of the city as well as on the southeastern hill of the City of David (Reich and Shukron 2003: 211).

[893] Faust 2005: 109; and Reich and Shukron 2003: 215-216. Estimates for the number of inhabitants living within the walled sections of Jerusalem range from anything between 16,250 and 32,500; the entire population of Jerusalem may have numbered anywhere from 17,250 to 40,000 (Faust 2005: 111). A secondary capital and administrative center that may have helped ease the demographic overflow in Jerusalem was established at Ramat Rahel (3 km south of Jerusalem) in the late eighth century.

[894] Faust 2005: 102-103.

population movements: the influx of northern refugees in the years following the destruction of Samaria, and the wave of refugees from the Shephelah following Sennacherib's campaign of 701 BCE.[895]

Contemporary to this development was the emergence of a well-articulated settlement hierarchy in Judah: the period from the late eighth through early sixth centuries saw the development of fortified towns within the framework of the royal administration. The four primary cities which appear to have gained both fortifications and the status of secondary administrative centers during this period were Lachish III, Beersheba II, Tel Beit Mirsim A, and Tel en-Nasbeh.[896] An analysis of the city plans of these sites reveals, however, that their transformation into administrative centers did not conform to a single model; according to Herzog, the varying architectural characteristics of these towns indicate their differing functions within the royal administrative framework.[897]

Further evidence for a more advanced bureaucratic apparatus in Judah is the dramatic increase in the number of seals, seal impressions (bullae), and ostraca dating

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[895] See especially Finkelstein and Silberman 2006: 259-285. Cf. L. Tatum 2003: 297 and Faust 2005: 109, note 16. In a recent article, however, Na'aman (2007: 21-56) attributes the expansion of Jerusalem primarily to a steady development in the course of the eighth-seventh centuries, in which refugees from Sennacherib's campaign of 701 BCE played a part. (See below, n. 1138 on p. 335 for further discussion of Na'aman's thesis.) Na'aman does acknowledge, however, that the data from surveys and excavations show a marked increase in Jerusalem's population during the late eighth-early seventh century. While he attributes this growth primarily to Judean refugees from the surrounding countryside (and secondarily to a steady increase in population beginning in the ninth century), the attribution of part of this growth to a population movement from the southern hills of Samaria seems equally as viable.

[896] Herzog 1992: 231-274. Lachish III represented one of Judah's primary administrative centers. In this stratum, the gate, podium of the fortress and the system of stables first built in Level IV were extended (Ussishkin 1983: 147-154); the entire public area, consisting of a raised palace, a court, royal storehouses, stables, and the gate covered 1.5 hectares, whereas the city itself covered an area of 7 hectares (Herzog 1992: 258). Beer-sheba II, a well-planned secondary administrative center and a fortified "public city," grew to a size of 1.15 hectares and featured a system of well-built storehouses and an elaborate water system, which had already been built before (*ibid*, 258-261). Beersheba Level II represents the last Iron Age urban settlement at the site (Faust 2003b: 126). Tel Beit-Mirsim became a walled provincial town during this period, and reached a size of 3 hectares (Herzog 1992: 261; cf. Faust 2003b: 131). Tel en-Nasbeh, initially a provincial town in the kingdom of Judah, was converted into a fortified administrative city during the late Iron II period and came to cover an area of 3 hectares (Herzog 1992: 261-263): following the erection of a massive city wall during the ninth century, by the end of the Iron II period a new city gate had been built, along with an adjacent public quarter and several large four-room buildings along the periphery of the site (Faust 2003b: 127). Most sites in Judah varied from 3 to 10 hectares (with the exception of Jerusalem, which grew to a size of 65 hectares).

[897] Herzog 1992: 263. Cf. also Faust's study (2003b: 123-138) of the "nature of residential patterns and land-use in several Iron Age cities" of Judah (p. 123).

from the late eighth through the early sixth centuries BCE.[898] From Jerusalem itself

come around ninety inscriptions (not counting the seals and bullae), most of which were

discovered on the eastern spur (the Ophel and the City of David).[899] Monumental

inscriptions (in the Siloam tunnel and at the entrances of the Silwan tombs)[900] and

standardized weights make their first appearance.[901] The higher level of organization of

the Judean state is evidenced also by the *lmlk* jars and the seal impressions of officials

found on some of these jars.

The appearance of the *lmlk* jars, together with the mass-production of pottery[902]

and the evidence for state-controlled olive oil production in the Shephelah (at Tel Beit

Mirsim and Beth Shemesh)[903] indicate that Judah's economy saw a marked increase in

complexity following its late eighth century incorporation into the Assyrian regional

system (as already mentioned above). This integration of Judah's economy was not a

smooth process: it was dramatically interrupted by Sennacherib's campaign against Judah

in 701, which targeted sites in the Shephelah and the Beersheba Valley.[904] Nevertheless,

during the reign of Manasseh (early seventh century BCE), Judah was apparently

reincorporated into the Assyrian regional economy and seems to have resumed activity in

the Beersheba Valley (along the roads from Arabia), the Buqe'a and the southern Jordan

Valley.[905] Many of the sites in the Shephelah and Beersheba Valley that had been

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[898] Sass 1993: 194-256; J. Renz 1995: 38-39.

[899] F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 203-245. These inscriptions likewise date to a period from the late eighth through the early sixth centuries BCE.

[900] *Silm* 1 and *Silw* 1-3. Archaeologists have also uncovered two fragments of possible royal inscriptions in Jerusalem: *Jslm* 23 (late eighth or early seventh century) and *Jslm* 24 (late eighth century) (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 226-229). See section below on the monumental inscriptions found in Judah, pp. 302-305.

[901] R. Kletter 1991: 19-54.

[902] Zimhoni 1997: 170-172.

[903] Finkelstein and Na'aman 2004: 74-75.

[904] Major destruction layers which can be associated with the Sennacherib campaign of 701 BCE have been uncovered at Tel Beit Mirsim Stratum A, Tel Halif Stratum VIB, Tel Beersheba Stratum II, and Tel 'Eton Stratum II. For the Assyrian campaign and desolation of Judah see B. Halpern 1991: 11-107 and N. Na'aman 2005: 153-178.

[905] Finkelstein and Na'aman 2004: 71. According to Assyrian sources, Manasseh (697/6-641 BCE) was an Assyrian vassal: he is mentioned among the western vassals mobilized by Esarhaddon to transport building materials for the construction of his palace at Nineveh, and as one of the rulers who participated in Ashurbanipal's campaign to Egypt in 667 BCE (R. Borger 1956: 60, line 55; M. Sterck 1916: 138, line 25). While Assyria's involvement in Judah's affairs following the Assyrian campaign appears to have been largely indirect, R. Reich has argued for a literal Assyrian presence in Judah, at Ramat Rahel. According to Reich, the architectural remains exposed at Ramat Rahel could indicate an Assyrian presence at the site, particularly the palace or residence that is reminiscent of the building plan of an Assyrian double temple; R. Reich 2003: 124-129.

destroyed by Sennacherib in 701 BCE were partly reoccupied during this time. Finkelstein and Na'aman attribute the recovery of several devastated Shephelah sites to a process of state-organized reoccupation of sites in the Shephelah (as well as to the "spontaneous return of refugees" from the Shephelah).[906] Fantalkin has added that the renewal of the Shephelah "shows signs of cooperation between Judah and Ekron under both the *pax Assyriaca* and the *pax Aegyptiaca*."[907]

Under the auspices of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (at least until the second half of the seventh century, which saw the decline of Assyrian power), a complex economic system involving four well-integrated zones of production was established during the seventh century in Judah and Philistia.[908] While the Assyrians both enabled and benefited from the prosperity that resulted from this system, the "driving economic force" behind it was Phoenician maritime trade.[909] As the century passed, the large needs of the expanding Egyptian market may have made Egypt a prime mover behind the development of the local (Judean and Philistine) system. According to the recent study of Faust and Weiss, the heart of the economic system and the first zone of production was Ashkelon, the site of a huge Mediterranean port and producer of the most profitable product of the time – wine. The production of olive oil (the second zone) took place along the inner coastal plain and the Shephelah, and is best represented by Ekron; the third and fourth zones of production – yielding grains and grazing – consisted of Judah and the Negev.

That Judah recovered so quickly from the Assyrian campaign of 701 and played an active part in this economic system can be seen in its seventh century settlement

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[906] Finkelstein and Naaman 2004: 71; cf. Fantalkin 2004: 256. This view opposes the conclusion of Bunimovitz and Lederman (2003: 3-26) that the Shephelah remained devastated and depopulated during the main part of the seventh century. That the renewal of the Shephelah began as early as the days of Manasseh is suggested by the re-activation of the Beth Shemesh reservoir in the days of Manasseh (A. Fantalkin 2004: 257). (Beth Shemesh was one of the two sites in the Shephelah where large-scale, state-controlled olive oil production had taken place in the previous century.)

[907] Fantalkin 2004: 245. The economic cooperation between Judah and Ekron was either "developed in an independent manner, in their own interests and without strict Assyrian pressure," or Assyria forced Judah to send its olive produce to Ekron, as part of a levy imposed by the Assyrians (p. 256).

[908] Faust and Weiss 2005: 71-92. Cf. the earlier study of Fantalkin 2004: 245-261.

[909] Faust and Weiss 2005: 86. According to Faust and Weiss, Judah and Philistia likely exported surpluses through the Philistine port city of Ashkelon to the Phoenicians, who carried the products throughout the Mediterranean. They conclude that "It was therefore the Phoenician trade that served as an impetus for the development of the economic system that incorporated Philistia and Judah" (p. 85).

patterns and in the evidence for international trade and economic changes.[910] During the seventh century, Judah expanded into several un-/under-exploited regions (despite the fact that much of Judah's territories in the west were transferred to Philistine rule following the 701 campaign). The entire desert region east of Jerusalem appears to have been almost entirely devoid of settlement until the seventh century, when the area experienced an "unparalleled wave of settlement activity."[911] In the Beersheba and Arad Valleys of the Negev, settlement expanded greatly; Faust and Weiss connect this settlement primarily with Judah's need for more grain, and secondarily with the Negev's participation in the Arabian trade.[912] There is more direct evidence for prosperity and international trade in Judah dating to this period: in the Ophel and in the City of David at Jerusalem, the discovery of fish bones reveals intensive trade with the Mediterranean and the southern coastal plain; long-distance trade is indicated likewise by an analysis of shells found in the City of David and wood found in the Ophel.[913] Furthermore, the discovery of names inscribed in South Arabian script on local pottery may indicate the presence of foreign traders in Jerusalem.[914] The commodities found in Jerusalem (fish, imported wood) may have been part of what Judah got in exchange for its grains (and perhaps also its wine), probably directly from Ashkelon, as Judah "seems to have functioned as the 'grain basket' of the entire region."[915]

The specific historical conditions of Neo-Assyrian imperialism which occasioned the growth of Judah's economy and steered it towards an intensification of agropastoral

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[910] That Jerusalem recovered so quickly might suggest that Hezekiah and Sennacherib came to some resolution that did not result in Jerusalem's total annihilation. Both the biblical account (2 Kings 18:14) and Sennacherib's Annals record that Hezekiah sent a huge tribute to Nineveh after the Assyrian army had left Judah. This tribute, together with the large number of deportees taken from Judah by the Assyrians (according to the Assyrian account, 200,150), implies that Hezekiah acknowledged the success of Sennacherib's campaign, and that he may have avoided complete catastrophe through this rendering of tribute and prisoners (see Dalley 2004: 391-394).

[911] Faust and Weiss 2005: 74.

[912] *Ibid.* Cf. Finkelstein 1994: 175-181. Finkelstein (1992: 165) argues that Judah's greatest era of prosperity during the seventh century is to be attributed to the new Assyrian policy of direct intervention in the south. This resulted in the diversion of the main trade route from further south, via eastern Sinai, to Edom and southern Judah. In the late eighth century, Assyrian policy had been more indirect: they apparently controlled the Arabian trade by agreements with local Arab chiefs.

[913] *Ibid*, 75. The shells appear to have had their origin in the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, and the River Nile. Wood remains found in the Ophel as well as in the Beersheba and Arad valleys likewise indicate the importation of cedar from the far north (Lebanon).

[914] Shiloh 1985: 113-146. Cf. Faust and Weiss 2005: 75.

[915] Faust and Weiss 2005: 80.

production as well as an active participation in the Arabian trade, arguably resulted in dramatic shifts in the social life of Judah from the late eighth century through its dissolution by the Babylonians in the early sixth century.[916] This shift appears to be reflected in the archaeological evidence for the presence of an affluent social elite during this period. Testifying to the existence of this elite class are the finely constructed chamber-tombs uncovered to the west of Jerusalem – those of Ketef Hinnom and of Mamilla.[917] Later clusters of tombs preserve inscriptions by their entrances (the late eighth century tombs at Silwan)[918] and contain fine grave goods (the seventh century burial cave no. 24 at Ketef Hinnom).[919] The cemeteries around Jerusalem do not provide the only evidence for the burial of elites; well constructed tombs have been discovered at various sites throughout Judah, some with inscriptions.[920] Together with the carving of inscriptions by some tomb entrances and the depositing of grave goods, these rock-cut bench tombs functioned as symbols created to project and maintain the elite hierarchy.[921]

From the late eighth century onwards, social stratification in Judean society is reflected not merely in the existence of these rock-cut bench tombs, but in the hundreds of inscribed private seals that have surfaced on the Jerusalem antiquities market and in the changes in land use evident in Area G of that city.[922] By the last half of the seventh century, private buildings noted for the quality of their construction and architectural plan (Stratum 10) were built on the large monumental structure (known as the "stepped stone

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[916] Cf. Finkelstein and Silberman 2006: 259-285; Halpern 1991: 11-107 and 1996: 281-338; Routledge 2004: 207-208.

[917] The earliest of these tombs probably date to approximately the same time as the western expansion of the city in the mid-late eighth century (Reich and Shukron 2003: 211).

[918] At Silwan, four inscriptions survive by the entrances of finely constructed chamber-tombs; one of these, in making reference to the "royal steward," serves as additional evidence for the presence of a royal administration during the late eighth century (cf. Davies 2002: 279-280).

[919] G. Barkay and his team discovered the famous silver plaques and over 1,000 items in the repository of tomb no. 24, thus far the only repository to be uncovered with its original contents. Tomb no. 24 is one of seven late Iron Age rock-cut burial caves at Ketef Hinnom, some of which continued to be used in later periods (Barkay 1992a: 139-192; 1998: 85-106).

[920] Burial caves along with associated inscriptions have been found at Khirbet el-Qôm (late eighth century) and at Khirbet Beit Lei (early sixth century) in western Judah.

[921] D. Hopkins 1996: 121-139.

[922] The rise in population in general and in an elite class in Jerusalem in particular is also suggested by the intensive settlement of Jerusalem's hinterland during this period; as mentioned above, there was evidently a great need for intensive agriculture to support the metropolis of eighth- and seventh-century Jerusalem (Faust 2005: 102-103).

structure") which filled most of Area G.[923] This development indicates major changes in the character of the area: it would appear that "an area of formerly public character had turned into, at least partially, a residential area."[924] G. Auld and M. Steiner suggest that this new development reflects the rise in power of merchants, who may have inhabited these new structures.[925] Many different kinds of luxury items characterize the Jerusalem material and point to the presence of a rising elite class.[926] K. Kenyon unearthed a workshop for bronze.[927] The existence of an emergent elite class is also signaled by the discovery of "indoor" toilets in the "ashlar house" and several other residences.[928] Among the luxury items found in Jerusalem are a number of imported objects, including wooden furniture from North Syria,[929] wine jars originating in Cyprus or Greece,[930] ivory (from Syria?),[931] scarabs from Egypt, and fine pottery bowls from Assyria.[932] Judah's position on the overland trade routes and its active involvement in trade doubtless helped maintain this elite through the status gained by imports.[933]

Conversely, in the villages of Judah there is no evidence for socio-economic stratification during the entire Iron II period (late tenth century to mid-sixth century BCE).[934] Upon analyzing house size and organization as well as the size and distribution of agricultural-industrial installations in Iron II Israel and Judah, Faust has concluded that the basic social units were large extended families that dwelled together (contra Holladay).[935] These families were in turn organized into larger kinship groups (very

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[923] Shiloh 1984: 18; Shiloh and Tarler 1986: 196-209. The expansion of the residential area of the city in Stratum 10 (Shiloh 1984: 29) included the construction of the "House of Ahiel," the "Burnt Room," and the "House of the Bullae," in which traces of an archive with scores of bullae were found. In Area E1, the "Ashlar House" was repaired (*Ibid*, 14). The repair and remodeling undergone by numerous Stratum 10 buildings testifies to the prosperity of this stratum in general (*Ibid*, 18).
[924] Faust 2003b: 130.
[925] Auld and Steiner 1996: 42, 65-66. See also Steiner 2001: 280-288. The quality of the construction in these houses, with their quoins and doorways of dressed limestone, was quite good.
[926] Tatum 2003: 301.
[927] M. Steiner 1998: 159.
[928] Cahill, *et al*. 1991: 64-69.
[929] Shiloh 1984: 19.
[930] Steiner 1998: 160.
[931] Ariel 1990: 124-126.
[932] Steiner 1998: 161.
[933] Hopkins 1996: 121-139.
[934] Faust 2000b: 28.
[935] Faust 2000b: 19-23; 1999: 233-252. Faust disagrees with Holladay's assertion (1995: 392-393) that the identity of the basic social unit in both urban *and* rural sectors was the nuclear family; he does believe that Holladay's conclusion regarding the nuclear family as the basic social unit in the urban sector is better

likely lineages) that managed the production and storage facilities of the village. For the rural sector, therefore, the rise of the monarchy and the accompanying process of urbanization do not appear to have affected the social framework. This state of affairs contrasts with the emerging shift in family structure that developed at urban sites in Iron II Israel and Judah and that appears linked to the rise of the monarchy: the appearance of the nuclear family as the essential social unit in urban settlements.[936]

The archaeological evidence for the developments in Judah's economy[937] described earlier and dating to a period between the late eighth and early sixth centuries, when combined with the evidence for the rise of an elite class, suggests the emergence of a new set of distinct elite entities, at least partially separated from the traditional networks of kin and locality.[938] Over fifteen years ago, B. Halpern suggested one possible scenario for the way in which social change might have taken place in the wake of Judean resistance to Assyria.[939] His scenario connected the emergence of a landowning and administrative class specifically with the military tactics employed by King Hezekiah (727-698 or 715-686 BCE) to prepare for the Assyrian invasion, and it relied on an un-provable interpretation of the *lmlk* jars as playing a role in these preparations.

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founded, however. As evidence, Faust notes that most rural houses are of the four-room type, and in most of these houses, the rooms are internally divided into 6-8 rooms. The large number of rooms in rural houses suggests that they were occupied by an extended family. Conversely, most urban houses are of the three-room subtype, and most of these are not divided any further. The distribution of production installations in urban and rural sites also apparently reflects this difference in family structure; in the cities, the industrial and food processing installations were distributed throughout the city area, within and between different houses, seemingly without any order or organization; this leads to the conclusion that each installation supplied only the needs of a nuclear family. Conversely, installations in the villages were clustered in a kind of "industrial" zone, and were often very large (and perhaps collective?) installations. Faust speculates that the larger kinship unit, the lineage (or clan) took charge of processing the agricultural products for the extended families in the villages (Faust 2000b: 23; Faust 1999: 246-7).

[936] Faust 2000b: 21-22. Faust observes that sociologists have long seen a great degree of correlation between urbanization and changes in family structure. The direct cause of this change may have something to do with extensive use of hired labor: the construction of cities, staffing of administrative systems, and building of monumental projects required large numbers of workers.

[937] Routledge (2004: 209) has explained how an intensification in agropastoral production very likely led to "land consolidation and the disenfranchisement of subsistence farmers in the face of intensified 'cash crop' (olive oil and wine) production for export." Routledge follows Hopkins (1996: 121-139) in noting that such a development would explain the prophetic indictments against those "who add field to field until there is no room for anyone" (Isaiah 5:8).

[938] As discussed in the previous chapter, Routledge (2004: 207-208) has recently suggested a similar development in the social life of the Transjordan. But the evidence for an emergence of elite entities in the Transjordan during this period is not as clearly evident as it is in Judah (at least not until the late sixth and fifth centuries, when individuated burials and funerary assemblages make their first appearance in the Transjordanian archaeological record).

[939] Halpern 1991: 11-107.

While one could quibble with the specifics of Halpern's theory, the core idea – how social life could have been reordered by specific events (such as Sennacherib's campaign in 701 BCE) and by specific projects (such as fortification building) – suggests a plausible way in which a class of elites, existing partially outside of the kin and locality networks, and associated with the military infrastructure of the state as well as with the trade activities encouraged by the Assyrians, could have emerged. It may be conjectured, therefore, that the conditions of Assyrian imperialism helped create a kind of "detached" elite identity that, together with agricultural intensification, amplified production for trade, increased militarization, and state administrative expansion, contributed to the growing monopolization of state hegemony over various social fields within Judah.[940]

While the new elite classes evidently benefited from the conditions established by Assyrian imperialism, on the political and diplomatic front Assyria's potentially threatening presence was one which required a delicate balancing act from the Judean administration. As was the case with all the states that arose during the eighth through seventh centuries, the emergence of the Neo-Assyrian Empire meant that elites were forced to choose between the two strategies of paying tribute or resisting (individually or in coalition with other small polities).

Up until the late seventh century, Judah certainly suffered a rocky relationship with Assyria, one that was probably closely akin to that between an oppressed vassal and harsh overlord.[941] As was described earlier (and in the previous chapter), Assyria took particular interest in controlling the Arabian trade network in the southern deserts, and as a result required Judah to tow the line as the local supervisor of this trade. Once Assyrian power had diminished in the region by the late seventh century, however, both Egypt and probably Judah benefited from the continuing Arabian trade. Finkelstein, in his book on the archaeology and history of the Negev and Sinai regions, even posits that at this point

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[940] See the discussion of Routledge (2004: 206-209), who believes that these developments may have taken place in Moab as well as Judah. See also the concluding pages of this chapter for an expanded discussion of how the conditions of Assyrian imperialism may have resulted in the emergence of a "detached" elite within Judah.

[941] Joffe 2002: 446-447; Hopkins 1996: 121-139; and Parpola 2003: 99-111. See Dalley (2004: 387-401) in particular for a review of the Assyrian sources that reveal the vassal-overlord relationship (or, as she prefers to interpret it, the client-patron relationship) between Judah and Assyria.

an alliance was set up between Egypt and Judah.[942] Unfortunately for Judah, Egypt could not or would not come to Judah's aid when the new power from the east, the Neo-Babylonian Empire under King Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed Jerusalem and dissolved the Judean state around 586 BCE.

Literacy and the Uses of Writing in Iron II Period Judah

More pertinent for the purposes of this study than any of the other critical trajectories (such as the shift in settlement patterns, the growth of a craft economy, and the establishment of more substantive administrative centers) indicating Judah's development as an "ethnicizing" state by the late eighth century is the increase in both the quantity and variety of inscriptions.[943] The majority of inscriptions found in ancient Judah by modern investigators relate in some way to administrative spheres of activity; some even point clearly to the workings of a royal administration and reveal that, as in Israel and the Transjordanian polities, the field of writing had come to be entrained by the state to fulfill necessary state needs and to help express the state's notion of hegemony over the population.

The uses found for writing in ancient Judah ranged well outside of the administrative and economic, however. Even a cursory look at the epigraphic record demonstrates that a number of different spheres of literate activity emerged in the eighth through early sixth centuries. These can be divided roughly into five main categories: economic, administrative and legal; monumental and publicly commemorative; private and official correspondence; writing exercises; and cultic and magical. These different spheres were not in principle isolated from one another; the spheres of literate activity represented by inscriptions and seal impressions undoubtedly often overlapped. In some cases (as with abecedaries), it is uncertain to which sphere a given inscription even

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[942] The establishment of such an alliance would explain a number of developments: the construction of Judean forts in remote places along the trade routes (Kadesh-barnea in the west and Haseba in the east); the presence of Egyptian hieratic ostraca at Arad and Kadesh-barnea; the presence of Judeans in Mesad Hashavyahu on the Mediterranean coast, and the activity of Greek mercenaries in Arad (Finkelstein 1995: 153).

[943] As has been noted in the previous two chapters, the spread of writing beginning in the eighth century was not an isolated Judean phenomenon; other regions of the southern Levant experienced a similar surge in writing activity, particularly Phoenicia.

belonged. Generally, an inscription's immediate archaeological and, where discernible, ancient social context, is probably the most reliable indicator of its use.

The high incidence of so-called "casual" graffiti – of the symbolic, non-documentary, experimental uses of writing – in the epigraphic record deserves to be singled out as a particular feature of Judean literacy. Many scholars have either largely ignored this graffiti phenomenon, or have latched onto it to make broad generalizations about the extent of literacy in ancient Judah. A more nuanced approach is required, one which explores in more detail what R. Thomas terms the "neglected aspects of writing," i.e. those aspects which do not conform to the highly literate assumption that writing means only what the words mean.[944] These aspects include the "symbolic" or "non-literate" uses of writing.

The evidence from graffiti (benedictions, dedicatory inscriptions, abecedaria, single letters, personal names) testifies to the fact that Judean writers were exploring other possibilities provided by the written word. At times, ancient writers seem to have consciously sought to exploit the visual effects of writing. As will be suggested below, just as much as the inscribed seals, jar handles, and weights, the graffiti stemming from the eighth through early sixth century Judean context can be attributed to different spheres of literate activity, and can in turn inform about the shape of literacy in Judah. What the presence of the shorter examples of graffiti cannot do is tell us much about the literacy of the graffiti writer (i.e. was he or she barely literate, semi-literate, or fully literate?), nor can it serve as a measuring stick by which to gauge the extent of literacy in ancient Judah. At most, the wide-ranging distribution of graffiti can suggest a widespread familiarity with the products of writing.

One more initial observation needs to be made before this investigation launches into a more detailed analysis of the different spheres of literate activity represented by the epigraphic record. That is the problem with the medium of the existing material: as a number of historians have commented, rock faces and pottery sherds do not represent the only media that were used for writing. Papyrus was probably widely employed as a writing medium in the eighth through early sixth centuries, even though only one papyrus

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[944] Thomas makes this argument vis-à-vis the prevalence of the non-documentary, symbolic use of writing in ancient Greece (*Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 1992)

fragment has survived – the one from Wadi Murabbaʿat (*papMur* 17), found in a cave near the Dead Sea and dated to the first half of the seventh century.[945] Other evidence suggesting the use of papyrus is the impressions of papyrus on the back of some bullae.[946] Since an extensive corpus of documents is unavailable, this study must make do with the attestations of writing that have survived.

Economic, Administrative, and Legal Inscriptions

      As touched upon above, alphabetic writing was most commonly exploited for its economic and administrative uses in ancient Judah as well as in the rest of the southern Levantine region.[947] The many attestations of writing deriving from the administrative sphere clearly point to the extensive use of writing in royal administrative circles. The clearest case for the association of writing with state-sponsored activities comes in the form of the mass produced storage jars found at many sites in Judah whose handles are stamped with one of two types of seals. The first type comprises seals with the phrase *lmlk*, "For (*or* of) the king," along with one of four place-names: Hebron, Socoh, Ziph, and *Mmšt*[948] (e.g., the two jar handles stamped with *lmlk/hbrn* and found at Beth

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[945] Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* 2005: 381-384. A late seventh-century letter in Aramaic on papyrus (the oldest Aramaic papyrus found in the Levant) consists of the right half of a letter from Adon, ruler of a city in Philistia (perhaps Ekron), to the pharaoh of Egypt (B. Porten 1981: 36-52). Mentioned in the previous chapter, a small piece of papyrus containing two complete lines and sealed with a bulla bearing the title "The king of *eqt*[ ]" has been recovered from the Moabite region and dated to the late seventh or early sixth centuries BCE (Bordreuil and Pardee 1990: 1-10).

[946] See below, p. 294 and n. 961.

[947] Philistia in particular is yielding a growing number of ostraca both incised and inscribed in ink, the majority of which appear to be economic and administrative in nature (most date to the seventh century). These ostraca have been recovered at Tel Jemmeh, Tel el-Farʿah (S), Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Tel Seraʿ, Tel Haror, Azor, and Tel Qasile. A particularly lengthy ostracon found at Ashkelon deals with an agreement to buy or sell a quantity of wheat, as well as lists of units (bottles) of red wine (Naveh 1985: 8-21; cf. Stern 2001: 115-118). The language of these Philistine inscriptions is West Semitic (close to Phoenician), but the scripts vary. Most of the inscriptions (such as those from Tel Jemmeh) reveal that in the seventh century BCE the Philistines wrote in a cursive Hebrew script that they adopted from Judah, but into which they introduced local cursive elements (Naveh 1985: 8-21; cf. Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997: 1-16). The script of the royal dedicatory inscription found at Ekron, however, is written in a contemporary lapidary script that appears originally to have derived from the Hebrew tradition (Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997: 14-15). A more recent find, another dedicatory inscription from Ekron, features a script that has close affinities to Phoenician cursive script (Gitin and Cogan 1999: 199). The seventh century Aramaic inscriptions found at southern peripheral sites in Philistia, at Tel Jemmeh, Tel el-Farah, and Tel Sera have been attributed to the Assyrian garrisons stationed there (Naveh 1985: 19-20). See also the previous chapter (Ch. 4) for a discussion of the economic and administrative inscriptions within the epigraphic repertoire of Israel and the Transjordan.

[948] Davies 1991: nos. 105.001-20.

Shemesh).[949] The same type of jar can also feature one of at least fifty private seal impressions of individuals; sometimes these jars are also imprinted with the royal seal (*lmlk*) as well. The *lmlk* jars represent "a long-lasting, multi-generational pottery production tradition in the Judean Shephelah," as several sites in the Judean Shephelah have revealed the existence of a precursor to the *lmlk* jars, dating to the late ninth/early eighth centuries BCE (and extending back as early as the late tenth century BCE).[950] This pottery production tradition may have begun as an unofficial enterprise during the Iron Age IIA, but it was then taken over by the Judean royal administration at some point during the late eighth century.[951]

The general consensus holds that the jar handles stamped with these royal seals "attest a state administered collection or distribution system for some goods," with the four cities inscribed singly on the jars representing four geographic regions in Judah.[952] The pairing of the royal seal and the seals of these various individuals on some jars apparently indicates that these individuals were functioning in some kind of official capacity for the state when they affixed their seals.[953] In regards to the social and historical context of the *lmlk* jars, an influential theory formulated by Na'aman holds that their sudden appearance in the late eighth century reveals they played a part in King Hezekiah's preparations in anticipation of Sennacherib's attack. According to his analysis, this explains "the correlation between the distribution of the 15 fortified towns and the royal seal impressions" and the paucity of the *lmlk* jars in the southern areas of

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[949] Bunimovitz and Lederman 2000: 106*. More than one-third of the entire repertoire of *lmlk* jar handles do not include the name of any town (Na'aman 2005: 170). The number of *lmlk* seals found up to 1990 are 1,200; they are distributed more or less equally between the Judean northern mountains (49%) and the Shephelah (47.5%). The *lmlk* jar is the dominant Judean jar of the eighth century, but it largely disappears in the seventh century (Kletter 1999: 37; Stern 2001: 189).

[950] I. Shai and A. Maeir 2003: 108-123; quote found on p. 120. Like the *lmlk* jars, these "pre-*lmlk* jars" appear to have been produced somewhere in the Judean Shephelah.

[951] Shai and Maeir note that this pottery production tradition continued in the Shephelah region after the late eighth century BCE, and argue that this "indicates that this region continued to play an important economic role in the Judean kingdom during the late 7th century BCE" (p. 121).

[952] This hypothesis was first made by Na'aman (1986: 5-21; reprinted 2005: 153-178). Many scholars accept this view, including Barkay 1992a: 302-373; Davies 2002: 280; Hopkins 1996: 121-139; and Millard 2001: 83. The cities mentioned are identified as Hebron in the central hill country, Socoh in the Shephelah, Ziph in the southern Judean hill country, and *mmšt* (likely Ramat Rahel) representing northern Judah and the region of Jerusalem.

[953] Davies 2002: 280.

Judah.[954] But other scholars believe the jars are simply symptomatic of the "considerable growth and increasing complexity of the economy of Judah" beginning in the late eighth century BCE.[955]

The exploitation of writing for the purposes of the state is likewise attested in the concentrations of archives with administrative documents from the late seventh and early sixth centuries found at important Judean sites, primarily at Lachish[956] and in the south (e.g. Arad, Horvat 'Uza, Kadesh Barnea, and Tel 'Ira). For the most part, these documents consist of lists of goods and names, and they seem to be related in some way to the functioning of the military.[957] The numerous Hebrew inscriptions (over a hundred) found at Arad, for example, suggest that Arad served as "a sort of depot from which supplies of bread and wine (and in other cases grain or oil) were delivered to military units nearby."[958] Horvat 'Uza, a fortress in the desert south-east of Arad, has yielded around thirty-eight ostraca, five of which have been published so far; three of those

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[954] Na'aman 2005: 166. In other words, the towns where the majority of *lmlk* jars have been found were those which were in the direct Assyrian line of approach and where, consequently, the *lmlk* jars "were assigned for the storing of provisions for the anticipated hard time of siege"; conversely, the towns of the Negev and the southernmost Shephelah "remained outside of this array of fortification and network of supply," according to Na'aman.

[955] Finkelstein and Silberman 2006. It is interesting to note that the *lmlk* jars were never found in royal stores, but rather, in private houses. As Na'aman argues (2005: 169), this puts into doubt the theory that the *lmlk* jars were produced and stamped solely for the products of the royal estates. Another theory, voiced by Cross (1969: 20*-22*), speculates that the vessels were wine jars and that the four place names were the points of origin of the wine (i.e. the districts in which the vines were grown). Na'aman believes, however, that this solution does not take into account the situation of looming war faced by Judah in the late eighth century.

[956] Excavations at Lachish (Tel ed-Duweir) yielded approximately thirty-four Hebrew inscriptions, as well as a number of seals, seal impressions, and inscribed weights. Among the inscriptions were administrative lists (*Lach* 1; 11; 19; 22; 31), jar labels (*Lach* 25-30; 32-33), and epistolary ostraca (*Lach* 2-6; 8-9; 12-13; 16-18) (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 299-347). Furthermore, a cache of seventeen bullae was retrieved from a juglet; they appear to have been "intentionally saved after being detached from the papyrus documents they sealed, as if remanded for administrative reasons" (Shiloh and Tarler 1986: 206). The juglet with bullae and most of the other inscriptions from Lachish were found in Stratum 2, dating from the seventh and sixth centuries BCE and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE.

[957] A number of ostraca bearing various military titles testify to the military organization of the Judean kingdom. These titles include *kzn* ("officer"), which appears on an ostracon found in the Judean fort at Horvat 'Uza; *sr hzvh* ("army commander") is given as the title of an individual named Kanyahu in the Lachish Letters; in one of the Arad letters, the title *'dny sr* ("my lord the commander") is mentioned (see Stern 2001: 172-173 for more examples).

[958] Davies 2002: 281. The vast majority of the inscriptions from Arad come from the late seventh or early sixth century BCE. They include letters, seals, various lists (inventories, receipts, disbursement records, and the like) as well as jar labels of various sorts (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 5-108).

published are administrative documents consisting of lists of names, most likely of Judean military officers and their subordinates.[959]

From Jerusalem itself, the corpus of inscriptions consists primarily of short administrative records dating to the late eighth century, and of a hoard of fifty-one late seventh-century Hebrew bullae (seal impressions),[960] still bearing the imprint of papyrus fibers on their backs, which were found in the excavations of the City of David.[961] The destruction layer of the structure (the so-called "bullae house") in which these bullae were found also contained a rich assemblage of finds, including inscribed stone weights and four possible stone cultic stands; according to its excavator, Y. Shiloh, this building may have been part of a compound that housed a scribal chancellery.[962] M. Steiner has more recently interpreted this hoard as a private archive based on the context in which it was found – "amid broken household pottery (cooking pots) and other small objects indicating family life."[963] Given the fact that the line between "private" and "public" documents and their storage in archives was never finely drawn in either the ANE or the ancient Greek worlds,[964] however, the discovery of this hoard of bullae in a private house does not necessitate that the documents sealed by these bullae related solely to private affairs: some may have pertained to the workings of the state.[965]

A considerably larger grouping, consisting of 255 bullae impressed with at least 211 different seals, all seem to date to the same time (late seventh century) and to be from

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[959] Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* 2005: 517-539.

[960] The discovery of seals is generally not as common as that of their impressions on clay, made while the clay is still soft. Seals were typically made of stone, often semi-precious stone, but they were occasionally rendered out of metal. A seal was impressed either on the handle of a jar or on a lump of clay (bulla), which was attached to a document or another object (such as a sack, wooden box, or even a window or door) to be sealed by it. The bulla is therefore a product of the seal.

[961] For the group of fifty-one Hebrew bullae found in the excavations of the City of David, see Shiloh and Tarler 1986: 196-209. These bullae were found in the so-called "bullae house," one of the three building units comprising Stratum 10 in Area G (built on two terraces covering the stepped stone structure). For the cache of 255 bullae, which were found in non-controlled excavation, see Avigad 1986. Cf. Avigad 1988: 7-16.

[962] Shiloh and Tarler 1986: 208. The bullae were discovered by Shiloh during the course of his excavations in the City of David on the floor of a house destroyed in 586 BCE (Shiloh and Tarler 1986: 196-209).

[963] Steiner 2001: 284.

[964] On the distinction between ancient and modern archives, see Chapter 2: 34-37.

[965] At Ugarit, for example, the scribe Urtenu kept documents pertaining to the international correspondence of the state in a private archive in his residence (cf. O. Pedersén 1998: 77; W. van Soldt 1991: 229-231; and S. Lackenbacher 1995: 67-76). As was observed in Chapter 2 (pp. 94-95), this suggests that the offices that were concerned with international relations at Ugarit were found outside of the royal palace, in the residences where the scribes placed all of the material necessary for their formation, and where they likewise dealt with trading affairs with foreign countries as well as with purely internal affairs.

the same hoard, although their provenance is unknown.[966] N. Avigad believes that these

bullae sealed an official archive of legal documents written on papyrus.[967] A third group

of fifty Hebrew clay bullae that appear to belong to a single hoard and probably represent

part of a much larger find was purchased on the Jerusalem antiquities market and

published by R. Deutsch.[968] Each of these hoards contains the bullae of individuals

bearing royal and official titles, which points to a clear overlap between the production of

seals and the burgeoning administration of the state. This is evident not only from the

discovery of bullae impressed by royal seals[969] and of bullae impressed by so-called

"official" seals,[970] but also by the discovery of bullae impressed by seals with titles

reflecting the military organization of the Judean kingdom.[971]

The variety of official titles appearing on these seals indicates the presence of a

relatively complex administrative hierarchy in Judah; these titles are similar to those of

officials in neighboring states during this period.[972] The attribution of any given seal to

an official context is complicated however by the fact that the distinction between

"functional" or "private" seals (title without personal name, attested almost exclusively

by seal impressions rather than seals) and "official" seals (title plus personal name) is

blurry and has little relevance to the seals' actual function: so-called "private" seals could

be used for official purposes, like the impressions of "private" seals on jar handles and

bullae found in Judah.

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[966] Avigad 1986. These bullae surfaced in the Jerusalem antiquities market in the mid-1970s.
[967] Avigad 1988: 11. The use of papyrus as writing material is indicated by the imprints of papyrus on the backs of these clay bullae.
[968] Deutsch 2003b: 45-98. Deutsch dates these bullae to a period between the last quarter of the eighth century and the first quarter of the seventh century BCE.
[969] See, for example, the black clay bullae with an inscription reading *lhzqyhw 'hz mlk yhdh* "Belonging to Hezekiah (son of) 'Ahaz, king of Judah" published by Deutsch (2003a: 13-14, no. 1); see also the royal bullae published by Deutsch (2003b: 45-98).
[970] For example, nine of the seal-owners represented in the hoard of 255 bullae published by Avigad (1986) were senior Judean officials: two individuals were designated *'šr 'l hbyt* ("who is over the house"), two persons designated *'bd mlk* ("servant of the king"), three *bn hmlk* ("son of the king"), a *śr h'r* ("governor of the city"), and one *spr* "scribe." For the publication of additional seals and bullae exhibiting the titles of functionaries, see Avigad 1997, especially, pp. 25-30.
[971] See, for example, the (unfortunately unprovenanced) seal published by Avigad (1980: 170-173) that is inscribed on one side with the owner's name and patronymic and on the other side with the legend *lpl'yhw 'šr 'l hms* "Belonging to Pela'yahu who is (in charge) over the corvée"; the title *śr h'r* ("governor of the city") attested on several seals and bullae may also be that of high-ranking military officers.
[972] See the previous chapter (Chapter 4) for examples of such seals from the Ammonite, Moabite, and Edomite regions.

There are two further bodies of inscribed objects that may be linked to royal initiative. The first grouping is the sixty-two inscribed jar handles found at El-Jib (Gibeon) and apparently associated with the large center of wine production that functioned at Gibeon in the eighth and seventh centuries.[973] The inscriptions on these jar handles typically consist of the (poorly written) name "Gibeon" and/or the wine merchant(s) who produced and stored the wine.[974] Some scholars have also connected the small, dome-shaped, inscribed stone weights found at sites throughout the region of Judah and dating to the seventh and early sixth centuries[975] specifically with the royal Judean monarchy.[976] According to Kletter, (who has made an extensive study of these weights), the Judean inscribed weights were part of a system which began to function at the end of the eighth century and came into everyday use in the seventh century. The wide distribution of these weights, their Hebrew script, and their material (limestone typical to Judah), demonstrates that they formed the weight system of the kingdom of Judah.[977] The standardization of the weight system certainly points to the initiative of some kind of powerful entity, although this entity could have been an elite class of merchants as much as the royal administration.

Regardless of the identity of the power which initiated the system, the weights themselves appear to have functioned not as royal weights but as regular, "common" weights for daily use.[978] This conclusion is based primarily on the archaeological contexts in which these weights have been found: most were uncovered in domestic loci, and many weights came from small sites, not situated on any international trade route. These weights, particularly those appearing in what Kletter terms "the heartland of Judah," likely represent private and local rather than royal or official trade relations; nevertheless, the fact that the weight system of Judah had been "deliberately adjusted to

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[973] Davies 1991: nos. 22.001-62.

[974] Davies 2002: 280.

[975] Kletter's 1991 study of these weights provided a summary of 362 Judean inscribed weights (pp. 19-54); as of 1998 (the date of publication of his full length study on the weights), this number had increased to 450 (see Kletter 1999: 32).

[976] See for example Stern 2001: 195-198.

[977] See Kletter 1999: 32-34. Cf. Hopkins 1996: 121-134, especially pg. 124.

[978] Kletter 1999: 32-34. Kletter does think that royal Judean weights existed, "in view of the major role of the royal house in the economic life of Judah" (p. 34). He believes that these were "perhaps different in shape or material, but not in standard, following the evidence of the inscribed "II *lmlk*" weight from Gezer" (p. 34).

the Egyptian weight system for the benefit of international trade" attests to their use in trade with other regions and states, particularly when it comes to those weights found outside "the heartland of Judah."[979] The 148 or so weights surfacing in areas outside of the "heartland," including the western Shephelah and the Coastal Plain, illustrate Judah's important role in facilitating trade from Egypt to Philistia to Assyria.[980]

The largely private, unofficial context of the inscribed weights is striking. Indeed, a surprising quantity of administrative inscriptions (primarily weights and seals) stem from a more private and typically urban context – that of traders, artisans, and other elite individuals functioning in a possibly unofficial (i.e. "non-royal") capacity. H. Katz has convincingly argued that the nature of economic activity during the late eighth through early sixth centuries BCE was largely small-scale and carried out in open-air markets as well as in private households. Evidence for this includes the fact that most Judean-inscribed weights come from domestic assemblages, the apparent incorporation of shops within private dwellings in Lachish Levels III and II, and the absence of evidence for independent shops, i.e. structures intended for commerce.[981]

Nowhere is the private and unofficial context of much written activity more evident than in the practice of sealing, a practice that became fairly widespread in the late eighth through early sixth centuries BCE. Before describing the developments in the quantity, users, and character of seals, however, a brief excursus into the function of seals and the problem of their authenticity is warranted. The use of writing on seals for administrative and legal purposes reflects the instrumental function of seals – their use to safeguard property or authenticate transactions and documents. It is also becoming increasingly evident that the Judeans used the products of seals (i.e. bullae) as receipts; the number of "fiscal" bullae mentioning different city names is growing, and more city-names are being revealed.[982] Deutsch has suggested that the fiscal bullae are

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[979] Kletter 1999: 34. In his earlier summary article, Kletter speculated that the deliberate adjustment of the Judean weight system to Egyptian practice reflects the growing contacts of Judah with Egypt (1991: 137-139). Stern (2001) notes that the "metal dome-shaped weights and the cube-shaped ones were forms imitating Egyptian weights" (p. 190).

[980] Kletter 1991: 137-139.

[981] Katz 2004: 268-277. On the basis of this evidence, Katz also concludes that there must not have been enough resources "to invest in the development of independent shops" in either Israel or Judah (p. 275).

[982] See the list of eleven fiscal bullae, impressed with ten different seals, and naming eight towns ('Eltolad, 'Arab, 'Arubboth, Gebim, Lachish, Ma'on, Nasib, and Keilah) in Deutsch 2003a: 87. For example, item number one reads: *b 26 šnh 'ltld lmlk* "In the 26th year, (from the city of) 'Eltolad, to the king."

contemporary with the *lmlk* jars, and that both phenomena should be linked to the time of Hezekiah and his taxation system.

In Iron II Judah, the use of writing on seals also took on additional symbolic and ideological aspects. C. Uehlinger has stressed the importance of counterbalancing the tendency to focus on the administrative and legal aspects of seals by noting the apotropaic, decorative, and symbolic significance of some seals. Seals did function as amulets and as jewelry; the material of a seal, particularly semi-precious stone, can point clearly to its function as a jewel. On a practical level, a seal doubling as a jewel had a function of adornment, and on a symbolic level, it translated power and prestige.[983] The trend towards the use of aniconic name-seals (i.e., seals which feature only written names and perhaps titles, but no iconography) in Judean glyptic in particular underlines the ideological use of writing on seals.[984]

Apart from the two groupings of late seventh-century bullae already mentioned above (as well as the bullae discovered during controlled excavations at several sites in Judah),[985] most of the published seals and seal impressions are unprovenanced and are known to scholars from the collections of private individuals. Mention has already been made of the 255 bullae that surfaced on the Jerusalem antiquities market in the mid-1970s and were published by N. Avigad.[986] The two other large collections published to date are those of S. Moussaieff (159 bullae) and J.C. Kaufman (516 bullae).[987] The fact that most Hebrew bullae have no provenance leads to questions regarding their authenticity.[988] While a number of these unprovenanced bullae are cited below, the genuineness of bullae acquired from antiquities dealers rather than recovered during controlled archaeological excavations will always be in doubt.

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[983] Uehlinger 1993: 273-4.
[984] See below, pp. 299-301, for further discussion of this trend.
[985] As of 1999, sixty-one bullae had been found during controlled excavations at Tel el-Judeideh, Beth Zur, Lachish, Beersheba, Tel el-Hesi and Jerusalem (Deutsch 1999: 9).
[986] Avigad 1986. See pp. 294-295 above.
[987] See Deutsch 1999, Chapter 3 (especially pp. 174-175) for the 159 bullae from the collection of Moussaieff, and Deutsch 2003b: 45-98 for the hoard of fifty Hebrew clay bullae "from the time of Hezekiah" (last quarter of the eighth century through the first quarter of the seventh century BCE). For the collection of Kaufman, see Deutsch 2003a. The bullae in both of these collections have been dated by Deutsch to a period between the second half of the eighth century and the seventh century BCE.
[988] Deutsch has tried to put those fears to rest (at least as far as the private collections of Moussaieff and Kaufman are concerned) by examining each bulla with a powerful (x40) microscope and presenting several phenomena which (he believes) attest to their authenticity. For Deutsch's discussion of the authenticity of the collection of Moussaieff, see pp. 22-24 (1999), and for that of Kaufman, see pp. 11-12 (2003a).

The three main developments in the use of seals from the eighth to the sixth centuries – (1) the increase in quantity of inscribed seals and seal impressions (already described above), (2) the apparent expansion in the social categories of those owning seals, and (3) the progression towards the use of aniconic name-seals[989] – demonstrates that this practice broke out of the confines of the state administrative sphere and became an everyday practice among the urban elite, symbolizing the authority as well as the status of the individual seal-owner. Regarding the first development, the custom of producing and utilizing seals began in the eighth century and steadily gained momentum in the late eighth through early sixth centuries BCE. The entire corpus of published Hebrew bullae, the vast majority of which date to this late Iron II period (late eighth through early sixth centuries), now numbers well over 1,000 in total.[990] Furthermore, an increasingly broader spectrum of Judean society came to be represented by seals during this period. Among the individuals using seals in the late eighth and particularly the seventh and early sixth centuries are women (from elite levels of society),[991] priests,[992] and a class of private officials (perhaps in the service of wealthy or prominent persons), appearing under the title *n'r* (literally, "youth" or "boy").[993]

It can be argued that a third development in the practice of sealing in Judah, the trend towards aniconism, reflected a growing desire on the part of the Judean elite to signal their social status through a display of script only (rather than script plus pictorial representations). The Judean glyptic of the seventh-sixth centuries in particular exhibits

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[989] These three main developments in the use of seals are handily summarized in Aufrecht 1997: 116-129.
[990] Deutsch 2003a: 11.
[991] Women from the elite levels of society in both Hebrew and Ammonite contexts are attested as the owners of several seals. Many of these women appear to have held relatively important roles in society. Deutsch and Heltzer (1995) mention the existence of Hebrew and Ammonite seals of "Fem. P.N. daughter of Masc. P.N."; the fact that the woman is identified by her father on these seals suggests that she was acting with her seal individually and independently and not as the wife of her husband (and, in fact, there are seals of "Fem. P.N., wife of Masc. P.N."). There are also a number of seals belonging to "Fem. P.N., maiden (*'mt*) of Masc. P.N."; Deutsch and Heltzer note that these "maidens" had a "relatively high official position in the society" (p. 88). Cf. the section on female owners of seals in Avigad 1988: 12-14 and 1997: 30-31. To the evidence of these seals can be added a complete ostracon published by Deutsch and Heltzer (1995: 88; early sixth century BCE) consisting of a set of personal names, among which is the name *mšlmt bt 'lkn n3 s 2* ("Mešullemet, daughter of 'Elikon n 3 s 2"). The unusual feature of the mention of a woman on this ostracon is that it represents the first example of a woman who receives something from a royal (?) or public (?) store; Deutsch and Heltzer note that "she works or acts on her own behalf and receives her salary or product ration equally with the others" (p. 88).
[992] For the bullae of priests, see p. 317 and n. 1069 below.
[993] See Avigad 1987: 205-206; *idem.*, Avigad 1997: 29-30.

an unusually large quantity of aniconic seals; for example, of the 255 bullae published by Avigad, only thirteen display pictorial representations.[994] Uehlinger has tracked several "non-religious factors" which appear to have influenced the trend towards aniconism in late Judean private name seals.[995] For one thing, as a phenomenon, purely epigraphic seals are not unique to Judah. The glyptic for other regions around Judah – most notably Ammonite, but also Moabite and Aramaic, demonstrates a "comparable evolution, although on a more limited scale, with an increasing production of aniconic seals towards the later seventh and sixth centuries."[996] (It is worth noting that Samarian and Phoenician glyptic do not share the tendency towards aniconism.)[997]

Another factor behind the proliferation of aniconic seals may have been the desire on the part of the seal owners to demonstrate their (supposed) literacy. Indeed, scholars generally understand the proliferation of aniconic seals in Judah to be "a consequence of growing literacy among the seal-owning élite."[998] In a society where the vast majority of people were non-literate, the possession of literacy indicated the possession of power and authority; the exhibition of writing on personal seals was consequently considered an exclusive mark of social prestige. Of course, the ability to read one's name and the ability to read and write a full text represent two very different kinds of literacy. The presence of the name and patronymic of the seal owner can go no farther than to indicate that elite citizens could read the pattern of their own names, without being able to recognize a single sign in another context.[999] What the proliferation of aniconic seals can

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[994] Avigad 1986: 118. Of the 401 bullae presented in Chapter 2 of R. Deutsch's 1999 compilation, iconographic Hebrew bullae comprise only 4.5% (p. 50). Iconographic bullae make up only 13.9% of the group of 109 bullae belonging to the collection of Moussaieff and published by R. Deutsch in Chapter 3 of the same volume (see p. 174).

[995] Uehlinger 1993: 257-288. The "religious factor" that is most often cited by some scholars as the reason behind the increase in number of aniconic seals in Judah is the prohibition against making images found in the biblical texts. In addition to the difficulties for this view posed above, it also encounters the problem of the dating of this "image ban," as the prohibition appears in texts that may date to a much later period than the Judean glyptic.

[996] *Ibid*, 283; see n. 84 for statistics. Even Ashkelon of the Philistines has yielded a seal with no iconic decoration but with a four-line inscription – it belonged to an individual named *'bd'l'b bn šb't*, a minister of Mitinti II of Ashkelon (ca. 670 BCE).

[997] In Phoenicia, almost all published Phoenician seals feature a design of some sort; this characteristic contrasts dramatically with the Judean and Transjordanian seals of the eighth through sixth centuries BCE.

[998] Steiner 2001: 283.

[999] On the other hand, an almost complete ostracon (early sixth century BCE) published in 1995 by Deutsch and Heltzer (pp. 92-103, n. 79) indicates that the literacy of the urban elite may have included the ability to write, as well as read, their own names. Eighteen personal names are inscribed on this ostracon, and each

reveal about the kinds of literacy among elite citizenry is the ideological use made of writing – i.e. its importance as a symbol of power and prestige.

The prevalence of aniconic seals and the wide distribution of inscribed weights therefore strongly hint at the emergence in the seventh century of a powerful urban elite of traders, artisans, scribes, and other individuals. The expanding role of this elite in Judean society may be confirmed by the results of excavations in Jerusalem, which show a marked change in the city's layout from the eighth to seventh centuries: according to M. Steiner, the city transformed from "a purely administrative center with public buildings only, to a city composed of residential quarters without large official buildings."[1000]

Mention has already been made of the "bullae house," one of the houses of the elite in Jerusalem in which was discovered the remains of an archive (fifty-one bullae). [1001] Excavators also found three complete ostraca underneath the floors of a bronze workshop. Other discoveries indicating the presence of commercial activities in Jerusalem include the more than 100 loom weights found on one street during the course of excavations; imports consisting primarily of luxury goods represent evidence for trading activities.[1002] Following the description of urban geographers, Steiner describes a city like Jerusalem of the seventh century as a "primate city," a city that is significantly larger than all other sites around it, and in which all power – economic, political, and social – is centralized. Most scholars conclude that the primary entity that exercised this control was the royal court, supported by a large bureaucracy. Given the evidence cited above for the rampant use of writing for administrative and legal purposes in the private sector, however, the distinct possibility exists that the urban, primarily merchant class of elites had gained more of the economic and political power than in earlier centuries.

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name was written in a different hand. Deutsch and Heltzer believe that this indicates that "each person signed his own name to acknowledge receipt" (p. 101). Unfortunately, the ostracon is unprovenanced.

[1000] Steiner 2001: 286.

[1001] The archive represented by this hoard of bullae may have contained "public" (i.e. administrative documents related to the state's affairs) as well as "private" documents (see above, p. 294 and n. 965). W. Schniedewind (2004) has argued that this collection of bullae proves that the lower classes as well as the upper classes are represented by the large number of seals and seal impressions found in Judah; he believes that some of these seals were "carved by private citizens of the lower classes" because they are crudely made (p. 100; cf. also Schniedewind 2000a: 328). But the fact that some of these seals may have been made by their owners scarcely constitutes evidence of such a scenario, particularly given the context of their discovery (i.e. one of the elite houses in Jerusalem).

[1002] See above, p. 286. Cf. M. Steiner 2001: 284.

Monumental Inscriptions

For archaeologists and epigraphers working in the field of Syro-Palestinian archaeology, the lack of royal monumental inscriptions from Judah (as well as from Israel) is a source of considerable frustration. It is difficult to imagine that the kings of Israel and Judah would not have followed the precedent set by both Egypt and Mesopotamia in erecting stelae as a means of symbolizing political and economic power. That the absence of royal inscriptions reflects a true state of affairs (i.e. that writing was never used by Samarian and Judean rulers for public display) is even more implausible given that their contemporary Levantine neighbors produced such texts. Israel in particular, given both its dominant status in the region over much of the Iron II period and its close affiliation with Phoenician elite concepts (including those pertaining to royal inscriptions), surely would have led the region in this regard as well. And it is probable that Judah, as an inheritor of these Phoenician-Samarian elite concepts and as a state emerging in its own right in the late eighth century, likewise would have exploited writing for the purpose of monumental memorialization and commemoration, and as an expression of its status and power (certainly the Judean elite did so; see below).

At least one prominent scholar has argued that this use for writing never made significant inroads in the Samarian and Judean regions. Na'aman has noted how before the erection of the Tel Dan inscription, there appears to have been no earlier tradition of carving and erecting royal inscriptions in public places in either Israel or Judah. He finds it telling that neither Israel nor Judah ever developed a lapidary style of writing, the kind of style that other regions such as Phoenicia (in the tenth century) and the Aramean states developed for inscribing royal monuments. [1003] Naveh, however, has noted that the cursive trend in Judah was so strong that "Hebrew monumental writing emulated the cursive style used by skilful scribes, that is, the formal cursive."[1004]

Furthermore, as was observed in the previous chapter (Chapter 4), a few possible examples of royal monumental inscriptions have been uncovered in both capitals.[1005]

[1003] Na'aman 2000: 93. Cf. Naveh (1982), who notes that "the independent Hebrew [became] progressively cursive, dropping the lapidary features as it evolve[d] away from the mother-script [Phoenician]" (p. 67).
[1004] Naveh 1982: 69.
[1005] From Samaria in Israel comes a fragment of a limestone stela 10.5 cm in size, on which only three carefully engraved letters have survived, reading *'šr* ("which/who"). See Davies 1991, no. 3.312 = Renz 1995: II: 135.

From Jerusalem come two small fragments of stelae that have been described as the first

surviving vestiges of royal monuments for public display.[1006] It is not clear,

unfortunately, to what kind of inscription these small pieces belong, let alone whether

they were commissioned by the king or not. One fragment, dating to the late eighth or

early seventh century, may have been part of a large stela, as is suggested by the formal

script and the thickness of the stone; only a few of the words are legible.[1007] The other

(ca. 700 BCE) contains what may be a date and is incised upon the smooth surface of

polished limestone; this fragment is also engraved in a formal cursive script.[1008] The

fragmentary nature of these inscriptions makes their association with a royal initiative

virtually impossible to corroborate. Nevertheless, the discovery of these fragments,

together with the fact that contemporary polities were producing royal lapidary

inscriptions, makes it likely that such texts were created in Israel and Judah as well.[1009]

Furthermore, the dearth of royal monumental inscriptions in Hebrew can be attributed to

the fact that both Samaria and Jerusalem experienced much destruction and rebuilding,

during which the stone stelae used for monuments were likely re-used in building

projects.[1010]

[1006] See, for example, Cross 2001: 44-47, Davies 2002: 280, and Millard 2003: 78.

[1007] Davies 1991, no. 4.125 = Renz Jer (7): 39, pp. 266-267 = Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: *Jslm* 23, pp. 226-227. The inscription was found on the Ophel hill, south of the Temple Mount. It is a fragment of a heavy stone-slab measuring 27x24 cm and is 10 cm thick. This fragment contains the beginnings of four lines of an inscription, of which only four complete words can be distinguished: *mtht* ("underneath/below"), *hmym* ("the water"), *byrkty* ("in the back side/in the innermost part/in the far reaches of the"), and *nsh* ("tear down/remove the") (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 226; cf. Avigad 1993: 526).

[1008] Davies 1991, no. 4.120 = Renz Jer (8): 32, pp. 190-191 = Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: *Jslm* 24, pp. 227-229. This fragment comes from the excavations at the City of David. It was originally set into a wall with plaster, because bits of plaster still remain on the back of the stone (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 227). The inscription is typically read *sbr h* [ ] *bšb' 'šr* [ ] *rb'y w* [. It is often translated as a date: "on the seventeenth [day of the] fourth [month]" (Davies 2002: 280), but Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. (2005) follow Cross (2001: 44-47) in suggesting the text refers to "the collection of money," and translate the text: "…the heap of…with a sufficiency of riches…fourth and…" (pp. 227-228).

[1009] Mention should be made here of the so-called "Jehoash Inscription," a black stone tablet bearing an engraved Hebrew inscription in ancient Phoenician script. This inscription had been attributed to the period of king Jehoash of Judah's repairs of the First Temple in Jerusalem, but there is now a consensus among most philologists, palaeographers and epigraphers that the inscription possesses some problematic features and should be regarded as a forgery. This consensus is confirmed by a recent analysis of the tablet's petrography and the oxygen isotopic composition of the patina made by Y. Goren, *et al*. (2004: 3-16). This study concludes that the inscription was "artificially created in recent times" and therefore represents "a modern forgery" (p. 3).

[1010] Such a fate befell the Tel Dan Inscription, which almost escaped detection by excavators because it had been re-used as building material for a wall bordering a large pavement at the entrance to the outer gate of the city of Dan (Biran and Naveh 1993: 81).

The grand irony of Judean epigraphy – that all extant monumental inscriptions derive from the Judean elite but not apparently from the king himself– reflects the important role played by the Judean elites in their society. The most famous of these monumental inscriptions is the late eighth century Siloam Tunnel Inscription,[1011] incised in the wall of a tunnel that brought the waters of the Gihon spring on the east slope of Jerusalem to a point were they where more accessible to the inhabitants of the new western quarter of the city. The text records the story of the hewing of the tunnel, including the remarkable way in which the hewers, working on both ends of the tunnel, managed to join up in order to complete it.[1012]

Many scholars like to see this inscription as a specifically royal text, and they attribute it to the efforts of King Hezekiah to construct a water system against the imminent siege of the Assyrians ca. 701.[1013] While the incentive for the construction of such a massive water system is almost certainly royal, the inscription is less clearly so. For one thing, although the writer engraved his text on a well-prepared surface and used a fine script, "the text does not conform to the usual ancient Near Eastern pattern of building inscriptions, which attribute public works to the king and describe the whole construction and not just its final stage."[1014] Second, the location of the text is strange if it is to be interpreted as a royal inscription, because it is situated where few would ever see it, in the lower end of the channel. Third, the content of the text points to the desire of not a king but an engineer, perhaps the official in charge of the work, to commemorate this major feat of engineering.

[1011] In the mid-1990s, J. Rogerson and P. Davies (1996: 138-149) contested the accepted date of the Siloam Tunnel Inscription, arguing for a Hasmonean era or later date on the basis of a paleographic analysis of four letters in the inscription. Their arguments have not been accepted by most scholars, however, who continue to agree on a late eighth century or seventh century BCE date (see for example Cahill 1997: 84-5; Faust 2000a: 3-11; R. Hendel 1996: 233-7; E.A. Knauf 2001: 281-7; and S. Norin 1998: 37-48).

[1012] The writer of the inscription may not have intended it to describe the entire endeavor, but only its completion. As some scholars have noted, there were several rock panels prepared in another part of the tunnel, which means that more inscriptions were probably intended to be inscribed in other places (see for example Dalley 2004: 391 and Faust 2000a: 3-11). The Siloam Inscription was not intended to be the only inscription in the tunnel; it was supposed to be joined by other inscriptions describing other parts of the operation besides its ending.

[1013] Several scholars have recently contested this explanation of the Siloam Tunnel. Following the conclusions of Ussishkin (1995: 289-307), Knauf (2001: 281-7) believes the tunnel to have been hewn to water the royal garden, and that this project followed an Assyrian model (cf. also Dalley 2004: 391). Knauf assigns the construction of the tunnel to Manasseh, under whom "Assyrian cultural influence on Judah reached its apogee" (p. 282).

[1014] G. Davies 2002: 279.

The other set of inscriptions frequently cited as "monumental" (but non-royal) are the four surviving inscriptions by the entrances of finely-constructed chamber-tombs at the foot of the slope on which the Arab village of Silwan now rests. These inscriptions identify the occupants of the tombs, and some contain curses against anyone who would disturb the graves. The Silwan Tomb inscriptions are almost never included in the same category as the burial cave inscriptions at Khirbet Beit-Lei and Khirbet El-Qôm: these latter two sets of inscriptions are assigned to the general category of "graffiti." Yet although they differ in quality of execution, in function these inscriptions are largely the same as those of the Silwan Tombs: identifying and commemorating the dead, addressing prayers to Yahweh, cursing any who deface or in someway interfere with the grave and its inscriptions. Furthermore, as Barkay observes, the type of script used at Kh. Beit-Lei and Kh. El-Qôm is not necessarily reflective of the literary ability of the writer; in the case of the graffiti from these two sites, "both the material and circumstances of the writing gave rise to irregular forms."[1015]

Although the burial caves of Kh. Beit-Lei and Kh. El-Qôm are not as finely constructed as the Silwan chamber-tombs, they and their accompanying inscriptions point to an additional aspect of the elite use of writing in Judah and in Jerusalem. Like the use of writing for sealing in Judah, this aspect exploits the ideological potential of writing as a means of symbolizing difference (from the rest of society) and status. Only an elite class of individuals could afford tombs and the inscriptions that graced their walls. This use of writing also hints at a mindset that views writing as efficacious in the carrying out of both blessings and curses, and as a mystical means of establishing contact with the divine realm. For all these reasons, one cannot miss the fact that the Judeans exploited the visual impact of writing as well as its seeming permanency.

Private and Official Correspondence

A number of sites in Judah, primarily the military fortresses of Arad (along Judah's southern border) and Lachish (along its western border), have yielded evidence that the potential of writing for facilitating long-distance communication was understood and exploited by the Judeans in the late eighth through the early sixth centuries. The bulk

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[1015] Barkay 1992b: 169.

of the letters discovered to date in Judah implicate the Judean military as one of the primary organizations which made extensive use of writing for this purpose. The data for letter-writing in Judah may be a bit skewed in favor of Arad and Lachish, because the sudden destruction (and limited re-building) of both sites ensured the survival of the seventh and early sixth century administrative archives, including the ostraca that contain letters.[1016] Because the contents of these letters deal primarily with administrative matters, there is some overlap in function with administrative ostraca. Yet where administrative ostraca are brief and anonymous, letters on ostraca[1017] have the potential of offering the reader more detailed information, not only about the writer, but also about the addressee, and even perhaps about the social and historical circumstances of the letter's composition.

Letters from Arad, dating primarily to the late seventh or early sixth centuries,[1018] demonstrate the frequent use of letter-writing among the upper ranks of the military or the provincial administration; in most of these letters, it is a major administrator or military commander at Arad named Eliashib who is the recipient of the letters, and it is either subordinate army officers or administrative officials who are the senders.[1019] J. Emerton has distinguished between two different forms of letter at Arad, and he argues that "the difference in form may … be related to the different nature of the contents,"[1020]

[1016] Both Arad and Lachish were destroyed in the early sixth century BCE (ca. 586 BCE) by the Babylonians.

[1017] Letters were also (perhaps commonly) written on other media, as evidenced by the only surviving letter on papyrus, the seventh century Wadi Murabba'at papyrus, found in 1952 in a cave about eighteen kilometers south of Qumran. It is a palimpsest: the underwritten text (*Mur* 1A) is a letter, and the overwritten text (*Mur* 1B) is a list of names (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 381-384).

[1018] A single letter (*Arad* 40) apparently dates to the late eighth century BCE (Y. Aharoni 1981: 4), although see Pardee (1982: 160) for a ca. 630 dating of this letter. Among the group of twenty or so ostraca from the fortress of Arad that date to the late eighth century, *Arad* 40 is the only letter; the rest are evidently administrative documents. This document is written to a certain "Malchiah" (probably the commander of the fortress at that time) and "refers to the troubles with Judah's Edomite neighbors on the southern border and asks for information about the difficulties to be passed on to 'the king of Judah'" (Davies 2002: 278-9).

[1019] Eighteen of the documents (*Arad* 1-18) are addressed to or concern this Eliashib; four letters are addressed to "Malchiah" (*Arad* 24, 26, 28, 40), and one (*Arad* 20) is addressed to "Gedaliah" (for translations and commentary, see Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 5-108). The find spot for all but one of these letters appears to have been a kind of record office that may have dealt with the distribution of provisions (Davies 2002: 281). The letters are not the only inscriptions found at Arad and dating to the late seventh and early sixth century BCE; five Hebrew seals and over a hundred other Hebrew inscriptions, including various lists and jar labels, were found at the site (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 5-108).

[1020] Emerton 2001: 2-15; quote found on p. 6.

rather than reflecting "different scribal schools," as Pardee has suggested.[1021] One group (nos. 16, 21, 40, and possibly 24) are characterized by the use of kinship terms and Emerton argues that these were personal letters. They are introduced by the writer's name and relationship (brother or son)[1022] to the person addressed, followed by the writer sending (*šlh*) greetings (*lšlm*) to the recipient (named as Eliashib), and (in 16 and 21) his house.[1023] Only one of these letters (no. 16), however, "indicates anything approaching family intimacy, a money problem"; the other two apparently deal with military matters.[1024] The second grouping (nos. 1-8, 10-12, 14, 17) does not name the sender, but begins simply *'l 'lyšb*, "To Eliashib."[1025] In this second form of letter to Eliashib, the supply of provisions such as grain, wine and oil (for soldiers?) is requested. The lack of greeting formulae, along with the content, identifies these letters as "formal letters of an immediate economic nature."[1026] Most scholars assume that the social slot for these provision requests pertains to military needs, but the possibility cannot be ruled that these requests were issued on the behalf of religious and/or civil administrative circles.[1027]

At Lachish, it is communication between military officers that again comprises the content of around a third of the inscriptions written in ink on ostraca, dating to a period shortly before the Babylonian invasion of 589/588 BCE.[1028] Whereas several of the Arad Letters are between kin, most of the Lachish Letters are from inferior to superior submitting reports and requesting information.[1029] These epistolary ostraca illustrate the

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[1021] Pardee 1982: 29.

[1022] Following Pardee (1982: 154), Emerton (2001) observes that these relationships were "not necessarily intended to be understood literally" (p. 5).

[1023] The writer then says *brktk lyhwh*, "I bless you by Yahweh," followed by *w't* ("and now"), which initiates the main part of the letter.

[1024] Pardee 1982: 154 and 160.

[1025] Pardee (1982) notes that this form of address was apparently the proper form for "introducing instructions to release goods from a storehouse" (p. 156).

[1026] *Ibid*, 155.

[1027] See Pardee (1982: 155) for this observation.

[1028] Around thirty-four Hebrew inscriptions, not counting various seals, seal impressions, and weights, were uncovered at Lachish (Tel ed-Duweir): apart from the letters (*Lach* 2-6, 8-9, 12-13, and 16-18), the rest are lists (*Lach* 1, 11, 19, 22, 31), jar labels (*Lach* 25-30; 32-33), and various scribal texts (*Lach* 23-24) (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* 2005: 299-347). The vast majority of these inscriptions were recovered from the debris of Lachish Level II, which was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE.

[1029] The recipient is named as a certain Ya'ush, who may have been the governor of Lachish; according to Davies (2002), "the deferential language ('my lord,' 'your servant') [of the letters] shows that the writers were subordinate officials, presumably in neighboring towns" (p. 282). It cannot be supposed that the Lachish ostraca were all sent by the same man (Hoshaiah, a junior officer), as H. Torczyner assumed in his initial publication of eighteen Lachish ostraca (1938: 17-18). Na'aman (2003: 175) suggests that the

ways in which messages were distributed among the officials of the Kingdom of Judah.[1030] Evidently, letters played an important role in communication, and it appears to have been customary for local officials to share the letters they received with neighboring colleagues. Several of these ostraca (*Lach* 3, 5, 6, and 18 in particular) provide evidence for the practice of distributing important letters arriving in the Shephelah among the senior officials who administered the fortified cities at the time.

While the evidence from the Lachish Letters in particular indicates the heavy use of writing in military circles for dispatches and records, it does nothing to dispel the notion that most of these inscriptions were probably written by scribes assigned to various military forts and outposts.[1031] Based on differences in formulation and content between the Lachish and Arad Letters, Pardee has commented that these letters reveal the existence of at least two different scribal traditions in late seventh/early sixth century Judah: a Jerusalemite tradition (Lachish) and a provincial tradition (Arad).[1032] This of course raises the perhaps unanswerable question of why were all Judean scribes not trained either at Jerusalem or in the mainline Jerusalem tradition?

There is however one epistle from the corpus of military letters that offers a glimpse of the degree of literacy possessed by an individual who was not part of the scribal class. The letter is *Lach* 3 (the so-called "Letter of a Literate Soldier") and the individual is a junior officer named Hoshaiah, who writes his superior officer Ya'ush to assert his competence to read. Even when the subject of the letter turns away from the issue of literacy to reporting the contents of previous epistles, its purpose is clearly to demonstrate Hoshaiah's ability to read accurately earlier letters.   Indeed, Hoshaiah is quite vehement in his protestations that he can read and has no need of a professional scribe to read him letters.

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ostraca came from several sites, although the fact that a number of the sherds (*Lach* 2, 6-8, 18) came from the same pot probably suggests that they were composed and sent from the same location, possibly a nearby fortress like Mareshah.

[1030] See Na'aman 2003: 175-178.

[1031] Aharoni (1981), the publisher of the Arad inscriptions, speculates that most of the ostraca from Arad were written by professional scribes, as indicated by the uniformity of the script and its well-formed letters (p. 141).

[1032] Pardee 1982: 161-162. These differences must be based on geographic rather than chronological factors, since the Lachish and Arad letters were written at periods separated at most by only a few decades, and were found at sites separated by only around fifty kilometers.

The letter's contents do not permit the claim made by Schniedewind (and others) that "literacy was the *expected* norm by both the senior and the junior officers" in Judah.[1033] What the contents do imply is that the skill of literacy (or at least the appearance of possessing such a skill) was a desirable one in certain circles of the Judean elite. Hoshaiah's vehement tone may reflect the fact that he came from an educational background whereby the possession of literate skills was expected – perhaps from a family of scribes, or even from the royal family/clan (as royals did and still do serve in the military). As a military officer, Hoshaiah's literacy may have been an exceptional circumstance; in other words, he may have been an anomaly in his own day.

Like the evidence from the aniconic seals, *Lach* 3 does suggest that the display of writing and the ability to read (or the appearance of such ability) was a sign of social status during this period in late monarchic Judah, and that some sectors of the elite classes may have prided themselves on being literate.[1034] At the very least, the letters discovered at Lachish and Arad point to the important role that writing had come to play in the Judean military and government bureaucracy, and they reveal that certain sectors of Judean society were coming to rely more and more on written rather than oral modes of communication.[1035]

Another striking witness to this movement along the continuum between orality and literacy is the fact that a Judean farm laborer at a seventh-century coastal site apparently decided to make a written appeal to the fort commander for justice in a case in which his garment had been taken from him. The appeal is presented on an ostracon (the so-called "Reaper's Letter," dated to ca. 630 BCE)[1036] that was unearthed in a guardroom of the small military fortress of Mesad Hashavyahu, located near Yavneh-Yam.[1037]

[1033] Schniedewind 2002: 102. Cf. I. Young 1998b: 413-4.

[1034] Cf. Young 1998b: 412

[1035] Cf. Schniedewind 2004: 101-104. Cf. Niditch 1996: 60-77.

[1036] This text establishes itself as an entity separate from a letter by virtue of its lack of an address or greeting (a *praescriptio*), its formulation (the first sentence uses *šm'* Qal rather than Hiphil), and its content (Pardee 1982: 154). Pardee (1982) describes it as "a judicial plea in epistolary form (i.e., direct speech, dictated by the author, to be delivered to the recipient" (p. 156; cf. K.A.D. Smelik 1992: 60).

[1037] Opinions differ as to the nature of the settlement at Mesad Hashavyahu. The most likely explanation, given the large quantities of East Greek pottery found at the site, is that the site was an enclave of Greek mercenaries serving the Egyptians (Fantalkin 2001: 128-147) (and not a king of Judah as some have suggested; see for example Barkay 1992a: 355 and W.-D. Niemeier 2002: 328-331). Rather than indicating Judean control over the site, the presence of Hebrew ostraca "suggests that the corvée workers, who provided for the needs of Mezad Hashavyahu and were employed nearby in Hazar Asam, were of Judean

During the second half of the seventh century, the site also appears to have functioned as an agricultural administrative center. The fact that a poor man working in an isolated and tiny agricultural outpost would issue a complaint in writing clearly testifies to how integral writing had become to the administrative and judiciary workings of the Judean state.[1038] Some have tried to use this ostracon to prove the existence of a literacy so widespread, that even a Judean worker could have possessed the literate skills necessary for letter-writing.[1039] But it is hard to believe that the typical Judean worker would have ever had access to an education in reading and writing, or would have had the need to become literate; the most likely scenario for the creation of this letter is that it was dictated by the worker to a scribe.[1040] As Smelik observes, "neither the handwriting (with ligature) nor the literary style point towards an inexperienced writer."[1041] The scribe therefore carried out part of the function of a lawyer today. The attribution of the actual writing of this letter to a scribe does not lessen its significance as a testimony to the

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origin" (Fantalkin 2001: 144). The so-called "Reaper's Letter" appears to indicate that the individual charged with managing the Greek garrison was a Judean official. The Egyptians probably placed a Greek garrison in Mesad Hashavyahu as well as in Ashkelon and Tel Kabri and employed the Kittim (mentioned in the Arad ostraca) along the Beersheba Valley route to protect the coastal plain (the main route to the north) and the southern Arabian trade networks, inherited by the Egyptians from the Assyrians (Fantalkin 2001: 128-147).

[1038] Another text that can be compared with the ostracon from Mesad Hashavyahu is the (unprovenanced) Moussaieff ostracon dated by Bordeuil, Israel and Pardee (1998: 2-13) to the late seventh century BCE. In this ostracon, a widow addresses a plea to an official concerning her inheritance. Similar to the Mesad Hashavyahu ostracon, in which an official is asked to hear the word of the sender, the text requests "and now: may my lord the [official] hear [your] handmaiden" (*w't yšm 'dny h[śr] 't 'mt[k]*). The widow's plea also begins with an epistolary formula familiar from the Arad letters and the inscriptions on pithoi from Kuntillet 'Ajrud: "May Yahweh bless you in peace" (*yb[r]kk yhwh bšlm*) (cf. Emerton 2001: 8). The authenticity of the Moussaieff ostracon, (so called because it comes from the collection of S. Moussaieff), has come under suspicion because of the "high degree and frequency of similarity" between the content of the ostracon and well-known phrases from Old Hebrew epigraphic sources (see Eph'al and Naveh 1998: 269-273).

[1039] See, for example, Schniedewind 2004: 103-104. Since there is little evidence for widespread literacy in Judah, it is quite a stretch to suppose, as does Schniedewind, that the redundant style of the letter indicates the worker may have written the letter himself. (Schniedewind does allow for the possibility that the letter was dictated to a scribe, who wrote it down with very little editing).

[1040] There are comparative examples of illiterates hiring or using scribes to produce written documents by dictation from the ANE world, although these examples are not contemporary with this seventh century case. In Graeco-Roman Egypt, illiterate and semi-literate individuals often hired professional scribes to aid them in handling the official demands for Greek documents as well as everyday writing needs (R. Cribiore 1996: 4). This type of procedure is also known from classical Athens, "where orators wrote the defenses for their clients, who delivered them themselves" (Smelik 1992: 61).

[1041] Smelik 1992: 61. The redundant style of the letter could even suggest that it represents a scribal writing exercise (see Carr 2005: 124, n. 58), but without other copies of the letter such a hypothesis is impossible to prove.

increasing role of writing in everyday life, at least where matters of law and justice were concerned.

Writing Exercises

The epigraphic finds dating to the late Iron II period, while yielding some information about a process of alphabetic education in ancient Judah, do not allow for more than the broadest observations about the way reading and writing were taught. The evidence can be divided into two kinds: more narrowly that small body of inscriptions from Judah that can be attributed with reasonable certainty to the process of learning how to write, and more broadly the general character of the epigraphic material. As far as the latter is concerned, much of the epigraphic material found in Judah exhibits a number of features that point to a degree of consistency in the training of scribes and therefore suggest the existence of scribal education: the standardization of spelling and scripts in many documents, the composing of letters following clear formulae and generic conventions, and the use of scarce equipment such as a stylus and ink.[1042] As D. Carr in particular has observed, "the writers of these documents were not just trained in the Hebrew alphabet … but had received a broader training that included standard spellings and textual templates."[1043] Furthermore, the very fact that the majority of inscriptions can be assigned to specific spheres of scribal activity – the making of administrative records, the engraving of monumental inscriptions for public display, the composing of military communiqués – indicates the existence of a class of professionals and craftsmen specifically trained to accomplish these tasks. In this way, the role of the scribes in Judah was similar to that of their counterparts in the rest of the ANE world.[1044]

[1042] Puech (1988: 197, 201-2) in particular has pointed out these clear signs in documents and letters that show them to have been produced by professional, literate specialists. Cf. J. Crenshaw (1998: 106), who suggests that "a remarkable uniformity of spelling and script must surely suggest standardized instruction."

[1043] Carr 2005: 122.

[1044] Some scholars have argued that the alphabetic writing system used in the southern Levant allowed Judah in particular to achieve a general literacy that was much more widespread than the limited scribal literacy of Mesopotamia and Egypt (see, for example, M. Coogan 1993: 437-438; A. Demsky 1988: 1-20 and 1985: 349-353; R. Hess 2002: 82-102; A. Millard 1998: 33-39, 1995: 201-217, 1992: 337-340, 1987: 22-31, and 1985: 301-213; A. Lemaire 1992: 305-312 and 1990: 165-181). But there was no demonstrable need for most Judeans to obtain literate skills, and apart from the relative simplicity of the writing system, there were no other societal elements in place to encourage the spread of literacy (J. Crenshaw 1998: 34-39 and P. Davies 1998: 15-36). There is certainly no evidence for the existence of a widespread educational system, i.e. a system of schooling in literacy for those outside the scribal profession, as some scholars have

As for those inscriptions that have been more narrowly identified as writing exercises, while indicating the learning of writing, they are unfortunately not very forthcoming in showing how scribes actually learned. All of the evidence regarding this training must be assigned, following A. Lemaire, only to the "elementary" state of the curriculum, "where the cheap but durable ostracon was the natural writing material."[1045] Based upon the epigraphic materials, Lemaire has pinpointed a number of elements that probably comprised elementary education in ancient Israel: these include the writing of the alphabet, the practicing of random letters or of pairs of letters that were similar, the repeated writing of certain words, writing lists of words, and practicing epistolary formulae.[1046] The elements described by Lemaire represent reasonably good guidelines for ascertaining whether any given inscription is a practice text or not, but care must be taken that not all texts of this nature are hastily identified as writing exercises, irrespective of their context and the media upon which they are inscribed.[1047]

Unfortunately, the more advanced stages of education are apparently unrepresented; it is likely that these stages would have required the use of papyrus or leather, neither of which media have a long shelf-life in the better watered areas of the Levant.[1048] Furthermore, the higher level educational texts become difficult to identify in the epigraphic record, as the more advanced student becomes more skilled in his writing ability. For example, a document such as that found at Mesad Hashavyahu quite plausibly may have been a practice text, but without the presence of multiple copies of that text such a supposition is impossible to determine.[1049] The Lachish Letters are more

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assumed (see below, pp. 314-315 and n. 1059). Moreover, neither the oft-cited biblical texts (e.g. Deut 6:9; 24:1-4; Judg 8:14; Isa 10:1-2, 19) nor the epigraphic record testify to a general literacy in ancient Judah. As in other societies (ancient and otherwise) that are neither fully "literate" nor fully "oral," there would undoubtedly have been a heavy reliance on oral modes of communication (see Crenshaw 2000: 31-44 and 1998: 34-39; cf. Niditch 1996, especially pp. 39-59).

[1045] Davies 1995: 205.

[1046] Lemaire 1981: 63-65.

[1047] Questions have been raised by Puech and others as to whether some of the inscriptions Lemaire identifies as educational were actually such. Lemaire has also come under a great deal of criticism for his eagerness in assigning any inscription that has no clear functional purpose to the category of writing exercises.

[1048] Cf. Carr 2005: 124, Davies 1995: 205, and Lemaire 1981: 33.

[1049] See Carr 2005: 124. Carr finds the Mesad Hashavyahu text "a particularly plausible candidate for a higher level practice text."

controversial examples of letter ostraca that could be either practice or actual copies.[1050] The impossibility of ascertaining whether any given letter or other higher level inscription is a practice text or not means that very little information can be gleaned from the epigraphic data about the more advanced forms of education in Iron II Judah, and about the context in which that education took place. An additional factor compounding the difficulty of pinpointing in the epigraphic record the higher levels of education is the likelihood that memorization and the recitation of written texts played a prominent role at these advanced stages.[1051]

As far as the training in "elementary" literate skills goes, the epigraphic evidence indicates that some kind of training in literacy was taking place in outlying areas of Iron II Judah. Lachish and Arad, both important military and administrative centers, have yielded possible examples of writing exercises in the form of abecedaries[1052] and lists of words.[1053] These inscriptions apparently represent only the beginning stages of learning how to write. Interestingly, a group of inscriptions representing somewhat more complex scribal exercises comes not from one of the large cities of Judah, but from Tel el-Qudeirat, a fortress in the desert to the south of Judah (probably ancient Kadesh-barnea).[1054] The group consists of seven late seventh century ostraca, one of which consists of six vertical columns of mainly hieratic numerals and weight symbols.[1055] The rest likewise contain signs for numbers and measures such as the shekel or the *gerah*, with the exception of one ostracon, on which part of an alphabet is represented. G. Davies has noted that in some cases the numbers and quantities were written out of sequence, and that some of the sequences are not complete, or their order is mixed up. "One gains the impression," writes Davies, "that a teacher would write out, or perhaps

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[1050] Yadin has argued (1984: 179-186) that the Lachish letters are copies, while Emerton (2001: 2-15) has issued arguments to the opposite effect.

[1051] Carr 2005: 11-173.

[1052] From Lachish come at least two examples of abecedaries that may have been writing exercises: an ostracon found either in the fill or on the floor itself of Palace C, on which a number of letters in the alphabet sequence can be made out; and the first four letters of the alphabet incised on the shoulder of a jar and found in the remains of a shop of Stratum II destroyed around 586 BCE (Lemaire 1981: 12-15).

[1053] The epigraphic finds from Arad include at least one inscription that can with reasonable certainty be identified as a writing exercise: ostracon no. 99 features the name of the city of Arad (*'rd*) incised several times on a plate after it had been fired (Lemaire 1981: 15-19).

[1054] Kadesh-barnea has also yielded an ostracon with a simpler kind of writing exercise: on a fragmentary ostracon were written *ml'*, *ml'* and then *wt'tsr*, *wt'tsr* repeated (Lemaire 1981: 20-25).

[1055] R. Cohen 1981: 93-107.

dictate, the numbers for a trainee scribe to copy."[1056] He goes on to suggest that the discovery of these exercises at Kadesh-barnea may relate to the training of scribes to serve specifically in the army. Perhaps this remote desert location served as a place of training in the skills that were used by the writers of, for example, the Arad ostraca, where many of the hieratic signs (as well as others) reappear.

The sites of Deir 'Alla, Kuntillet 'Ajrud, and Horvat 'Uza may be relevant to this discussion as examples of desert and/or remote locations where a surprising amount of literate activity appears to have transpired. It is not too far of a stretch to speculate that where literary texts such as the Balaam plaster inscriptions from Deir 'Alla, the possible "theophany" plaster inscription from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, and the possible "wisdom text" on an ostracon from Horvat 'Uza were being produced, there too scribal training may have taken place. The apparent transmission of relatively sophisticated literary texts at remote sites in the Transjordan, Sinai, and Judah suggests that one cannot be limited to a paradigm which locates the process of "education-enculturation"[1057] exclusively in primary urban centers (such as Jerusalem and Lachish).

This observation, together with the spotty evidence for training in reading and writing from Judean (and indeed, all southern Levantine Iron Age contexts), leads in turn to the problem of how exactly the field of writing was reproduced in Judah. Numerous studies have understood this as a question of scribal schools and royal sponsorship of literary specialists; i.e. they have conceived of this process as linked to a specifically state aegis. The issue is a particularly knotty (and oft-contested) one because, on the one hand, there is very little evidence for formal education in the Iron Age southern Levant, and, on the other hand, there is manifold epigraphic evidence not only for the existence of scribes, but for the presence of well developed "genres of practice, form, and content in the creation of texts."[1058] The response to this paradox has taken two forms, both of which are bound to the conceptualization of institutionalized state sponsored schools as the primary domain in which the field of writing resided and was reproduced. One group of scholars accounts for the epigraphic evidence by assuming that formal institutions of schooling must have existed; the other group highlights the lack of evidence for such

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[1056] Davies 2002: 283.
[1057] To use a phrase coined by Carr (2005: 115).
[1058] Routledge 2004: 187.

institutions and by necessity must downgrade the variety, quantity, and quality of the epigraphic material.[1059]

Routledge has suggested that the problem of comprehending where the field of writing existed and how it was replicated in the Iron II period be conceived of differently: he notes that "Iron Age writing systems have their own histories that are not contained within any particular state, or indeed within the Iron Age."[1060] This observation demands that the treatment of writing as a specifically learned practice not be constrained by rather anachronistic notions of formal education necessarily sponsored by state-linked agencies.[1061] Other paradigms pertaining to the reproduction of the field of writing as both an embodied skill and a category of culturally transmitted information should therefore be considered.

For example, work on the educative process in other cultures of close chronological and/or geographical proximity to Judah has proved a model of school-room education (such as is often conceived by scholars advocating the presence of formal educative institutions in Judah) to be inaccurate. Much of the scribal education in larger cultures like Egypt and Mesopotamia, for example, took place under the apprenticeship of more experienced scribes in the environment of the home or workshop.[1062] It was therefore a fairly small-scale apprentice-like arrangement that formed the context for the "education-enculturation" of scribes in these two great cultures for most periods,[1063] and probably for the scribes and other professional functionaries of Judah as well. Moreover, the nodes of literate activity evident at remote desert areas such as Deir 'Alla, Kuntillet 'Ajrud, Horvat 'Uza, and Tel el-Qudeirate suggest that the cultural transmission of

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[1059] See, for example, the arguments for separate, identifiable schools in Israel in Lemaire (1990: 165-181 and 1981, especially pp. 49-54), and E.W. Heaton (1994); for qualification of the idea of the existence of schools in Israel, see Crenshaw (1998: 90-99), G. Davies (1995: 199-211), Grabbe (1995: 173), and Haran (1988: 81-95); for arguments against the existence of schools in Iron Age Judah see F.W. Golka (1993: 1-14), P. Davies (1998: 74-88), and N. Whybray (1974).
[1060] Routledge 2004: 187.
[1061] Quite recently, C. Rollston (2006) has reiterated the claim that "formal, standardized education was a component of ancient Israelite society during Iron II," based on his study of the nature of the palaeographic evidence, the orthographic evidence, and the use of hieratic numerals (p. 47). His main argument is that "formal standardized education" conducted under state auspices is the only reasonable explanation for the orthographic consistency of Old Hebrew (p. 68). He also believes that the "primary aegis" for scribal education in Iron II Israel had to have been "the state."
[1062] See Carr 2005: 113 and Grabbe 1995: 173.
[1063] While most education in Mesopotamia and Egypt happened in such family-like environments, during certain periods there existed more identifiable schools in both regions; both Mesopotamia and Egypt have separate terms for "school" (Edubba/*bīt-tuppi*[*m*]; *'t-sb*).

writing as an embodied skill was not a process that always took place at urban sites closely linked to the state (such as primary and secondary administrative centers).

Cultic and Magical Inscriptions

Up to this point, the discussion has dwelt on spheres of literate activity in which writing was used for intensely practical and occasionally ideological purposes. The cultic, ritualistic, and magical use of writing represents the other face of literacy – the attribution of a numinous power to writing. Judah stands as only one of many ancient cultures, including Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece, which had a conception of writing as a kind of divine-earthly interface: i.e. that writing was handed down to humans from the divine realm, and provided a means of communication between the divine and earthly realms through the medium of performing rituals and reciting sacred formulas.[1064] The use of writing in the sacred sphere accrued a particular force in Judah (and in the other small "ethnicizing" states around it) as a source of identity concepts from which the upper levels of Judean society could draw as they strove towards social cohesion and integration.[1065] Through the medium of writing, the elites expressed and affirmed a view of their state as possessing stable and divinely sanctioned boundaries and a perception of their ancestry as unified by a common history, a common dialect, and a set of patron deities.

In Judah proper, the conception of writing as a conduit for the sacred is reflected in a wide array of cultic, ritualistic, and magical inscriptions, from the most laconic one-word inscription on votive bowls to the more intricate multiple-line blessing inscribed on silver amulets from Ketef Hinnom. Much of the epigraphic material that can be classified as belonging to the cultic sphere appears to stem from an elite, and often priestly context. Such is probably the case, for example, with the votive inscriptions on bowls from various sites (including Arad, Tel Sheva, and Tel Beit Mirsim) bearing the word *qdš* ("holy" or "consecrated") dating to the late eighth and seventh centuries.[1066]

[1064] For more on the numinous power of writing in ancient Israel, see Crenshaw 2000: 31-44, Niditch 1996: 45-51, 78-88, and Schniedewind 2004: 24-34.

[1065] The lower levels of Judean society were involved in the process as well, but their religious practices were expressed in unwritten forms, as testified by the countless domestic shrines, figurines and amulets found scattered throughout Judah and other southern Levantine states (Joffe 2002: 453-454).

[1066] Cf. Barkay 1992b: 178-179.

The incising of the word "holy" on these vessels probably indicates that their contents were dedicated to the sanctuary at each of these sites, and that this was done by the priests of the various temples.[1067] This hypothesis is supported by the contents of two different kinds of inscriptions found on fourteen jars dating to the seventh century from Ekron (Tel Miqne) in the region of Philistia; the words *qdš l'šrt* ("sacred to the goddess Asherat") is incised on some jars, while on others appear the word *lmqm* (which may mean "to the holy place," i.e. the local sanctuary).[1068]

Hebrew glyptic has provided the names and titles of some of these priests and cultic functionaries of Judah, probably connected with the temple in Jerusalem. Like other members of the Judean elite, these individuals also apparently possessed personal seals. The title *hkhn* – "the priest" – is attested on one seal and one bulla from Judah: *lhnn bn hlqyhw hkhn* "Belonging to Hanan, son of Hilqiyahu, the priest," and *lndbyhw hkhn* "Belonging to Nadabyahu, the priest," a dark brown clay bulla belonging to the collection of Joseph Kaufman.[1069] A second seal, said to have been found in Jerusalem, bears the legend *lmqnyw 'bd yhwy* "Belonging to Miqneyahu, servant of Yahweh"; the epithet "servant of Yahweh" appears to function as the ecclesiastical equivalent to the secular official title *'bd hmlk*, "servant of the king."[1070] An inscription directly related to the temple cult in Jerusalem is that found on an ivory pomegranate: *lby[t yhw]h qdš khnm* "Belonging to the temple of [Yahw]eh, consecrated (object) to the priests."[1071] The

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[1067] See Stern 2001: 204 for this hypothesis. Among several incised inscriptions found in the courtyard of the Iron II sanctuary at Arad was the letter *qoph* ("holy" or perhaps "sacrifice") incised on two offering bowls found near the altar (Aharoni 1981: 142).

[1068] Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997: 1-16; Gitin 1998: 175; Stern 2001: 118 and 204. The fourteen storage jar inscriptions were found in a complex just south of Temple Complex 650, where the royal dedicatory inscription of Achish/Ikausu, the son of Padi, was found.

[1069] For the former, see J. Elayi 1986: 43-46; for the latter see Deutsch 2003a: 64-65, no. 38. This is the first example recorded of a bullae sealed by a priest. The title *hkhn* is also attested on a seal found in Israel (Samaria): [*lz*]*kryw khn d'r // lsdq bn mk'* "[Belonging to Ze]karyau, priest of Dor // Belonging to Sadok, son of Mika'" (Avigad 1997: nos. 28 and 29).

[1070] Cross 1984: 55-63.

[1071] Avigad 1990: 157-166. The "house" (temple) of Yahweh is mentioned on an ostracon that has been dated to the late eighth or early seventh century by its publishers (Bordreuil, Israel, and Pardee 1998: 2-13). The ostracon, belonging to the Moussaieff Collection, refers to a command issued by *'šyhw hmlk* ("Ashyahu the king") to deliver three shekels of silver to the "House of Yahweh." The authenticity of the ostracon has come under suspicion, however (see Eph'al and Naveh 1998: 269-273).

authenticity of the inscription on this pomegranate had been called into question in recent years.[1072]

Inscriptions which appear to emanate from literate priestly circles active at the Jerusalem Temple are the benediction formulas (including the so-called "priestly blessing")[1073] engraved on two silver plaques and found in the burial cave of an elite Judean family at Ketef Hinnom.[1074] Following a new analysis of high-resolution images of the plaques, G. Barkay, the excavator of the burial caves at Ketef Hinnom, has confirmed the late seventh to early sixth century BCE as the correct chronological context for the objects.[1075] This conclusion is supported by the archaeological context of the artifacts' discovery.[1076] He has also classified these artifacts as amulets used in the apotropaic manner, and this classification seems to have been accepted by most scholars.

The Ketef Hinnom inscriptions were arguably written by someone associated with the priests in the temple, and the blessing formulation (the "priestly blessing") of both amulets was probably used in cultic contexts during this period. A very similar "priestly blessing" appears in cultic contexts in the Hebrew bible, and it is likely that it was used in this way in the Jerusalem cult. Further evidence is provided by a comparison with the early eighth century inscriptions found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud in the northern Sinai. Two

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[1072] Goren, *et al*. 2005: 3-20. Just this past year, however, epigrapher Lemaire teamed up with geologists A. Rosenfeld and S. Ilani to conduct a thorough reexamination of the inscription and its patina; they are convinced of the genuineness of the ivory pomegranate and the authenticity of its inscription. See Lemaire 2006: 167-177; the contribution of Rosenfeld and Ilani appears in an appendix (pp. 175-176) to Lemaire's study. Lemaire's assertion of the authenticity of the inscription is based on a personal re-examination of the inscribed pomegranate in the library of the Israel Museum using a stereomicroscope. He does not find convincing the characteristics cited by Goren and his team as evidence that the inscription is "a sophisticated recent forgery" (2005: 19). (These included the syntax, the spaces between letters, the presence of adhesive and the connection of the fragmentary letters with the breaks.) Rosenfeld and Ilani of the Geological Survey of Israel, Jerusalem, likewise question the methodology of Goren's patina study of the inscribed ivory pomegranate on more technically scientific grounds; they argue that Goren's use of the stable isotopes analysis as a methodology in the authentication of the pomegranate has some problems (in their own words, it "does not portray the real story of a patina growth that covers an artifact").
[1073] There seems to be a general consensus that these texts were produced by priests (cf. Barkay 1992b: 175, 180; Yardeni 1991: 185, E. Waaler 2002: 32). The presence of the "priestly blessing" on both plaques, the writing material, and the find-spot in Jerusalem – all indicate that someone associated with the priests in the temple made the plaques.
[1074] The sheer number of artifacts found in the repository of this cave, as well as the "careful hewing and detailed design" of the cave, reveal that a wealthy and prominent family had commissioned its construction (Barkay 1992b: 147). Clearly, the use of silver as a writing material for the amuletic plaques signaled that the owner of the tomb was highly placed in society.
[1075] Barkay, *et al*. 2004: 41-71.
[1076] See Barkay's earlier summary of the complete archaeological context of the plaques (Barkay 1992b: 139-148).

prominent words in the terminology of the priestly blessing—*ybrk<k> wyšmrk*—and also the name *yhwh* and *yhw* appear in the inscriptions from Kuntillet ʿAjrud. A. Yardeni has argued that the inscriptions and finds at this site "give evidence of some sort of cultic practice which included this pair of words already during that period."[1077] The fact that this particular prayer is found in both plaques suggests that in cultic contexts it had accrued a particular power and validity in securing the blessing.

In the Ketef Hinnom inscriptions, the priestly blessing is revealed as having also been used in a "personal and family context," as these inscriptions were discovered in a family tomb and burial of an individual.[1078] As the earliest metal plaques with amuletic texts discovered to date in Israel,[1079] these tiny inscriptions harness the power of an oral blessing, typically delivered in a cultic setting, and make it the personal possession of the amulet's owner.[1080] By involving the name of the deity as well as a text promising Yahweh's protective blessings, these inscriptions offer Yahweh's protection from Evil.[1081]

The texts on these plaques are particularly intriguing because they contain passages that are strongly reminiscent of the "priestly blessing" in the Hebrew bible (found in Numbers 6:24-26) as well as other passages within the biblical text (particularly Deuteronomy 7:9-10).[1082] At the very least, these texts "point to the preexilic presence of formulations also found in the canonical text."[1083] The contents of the plaques, comprising the earliest examples of confessional statements concerning Yahweh, do *not*

[1077] Yardeni 1991: 181. Following a survey of the instances in which similar priestly blessing formulae appear in biblical and extrabiblical texts (from Qumran), Yardeni has also noted that the priestly blessing "belongs to a group of strictly formulated prayers which are part of certain [cultic] ceremonies" (p. 183).
[1078] Barkay, *et al*. 2004: 68.
[1079] Most of the other metal plaques with amuletic texts discovered in Israel date to the late Roman and Byzantine periods (see Barkay 1998: 85-106). There is one exception: Lemaire (2003: 155-174) recently published a silver Phoenician amulet that he dated to the reign of Shipitbaal III, who ruled near the end of the sixth century BCE. Lemaire argues that the amulet was intended to protect the house of a certain Rakabosh (mentioned in the amulet), and that it was probably affixed in some way to the entry of his house.
[1080] Cf. Demsky 1988: 17.
[1081] The fact that, for example, Yahweh is described in lines 3-4 of *Ketef Hinnom 2* as a "rebuker of Evil" demonstrates the apotropaic function of this text (see Barkay, *et al*. 2004: 68).
[1082] Ll. 14-18 of *Ketef Hinnom 1* and ll. 5-12 of *Ketef Hinnom 2* clearly parallel vv. 24-26 of Number 6. Barkay (1992b: 154-155) followed by Waaler (2002: 49-51) have argued that *Ketef Hinnom 1*, ll. 3-6, also includes a passage that is reminiscent of Deuteronomy 7:9 ("… who keeps the covenant and mercy for those who love him and keep his commandments").
[1083] Barkay, *et al*. 2004: 68. One certainly cannot go as far as Schniedewind (2004: 106) does when he misleadingly declares that the content of the Ketef Hinnom amulets contain passages from the Torah.

prove that the biblical context in which the "priestly blessing" appears in the Hebrew bible had already been consolidated, nor that the blessing was already incorporated into a written Pentateuch by the late seventh/early sixth century BCE. Nevertheless, the appearance of two different amulets, written by two different hands yet with the same text, suggests that this particular blessing had become crystallized at that time as a regular part of ritual tradition.

It is the apotropaic function of these silver plaques – the fact that a certain protective power is attributed to the writing of certain words and formulations – that appears to be a feature of much of the ancient graffiti found in Judah and dating to the late Iron II period. The brief and often fragmentary nature of these graffiti, which renders them a seemingly casual, quotidian kind of writing, is gainsaid by their cultic and/or religious content, which distances them from idle doodling; furthermore, the context in which the graffiti is found – in cultic sanctuaries and burial tombs – suggests the deliberate manipulation of letters and words for apotropaic or ritualistic purposes. It would be impossible to say whether all of these religious graffiti stem from a priestly context; it is argued below, however, on analogy with Egypt, that the appearance of religious graffiti in the context of a sanctuary likely represents yet another expression of the cultic, priestly use of writing.[1084]

The first category of graffiti inscriptions with magical significance are abecedaries, those inscriptions that consist of several letters of the alphabet in successive order, or of the complete alphabet. The subject of abecedaries deserves a short digression, as there is much confusion regarding their meaning. Most scholars either interpret them as simple writing exercises or pass them over entirely, particularly when they appear in contexts that have little to do with a school setting. The varied contexts in which abecedaries have been found suggest that the meaning of abecedaries must not be rigidly defined one way or the other. It is certainly quite plausible that some alphabet-inscriptions were writing exercises; for example, the interpretation of abecedaries on ostraca as writing exercises has a good deal of probability, considering that ostraca were cheap and ready at hand. And there are examples of abecedaries in other ANE cultures besides the Judean culture that clearly appear to be writing exercises: a fragment of a

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[1084] See Chapter 2's treatment of Egyptian graffiti (pp. 52-55).

Phoenician abecedary from the eighth century written in boustrophedon in which the inscriber confused the forms of the *pe* and the *lamed,* as well as an Aramean abecedary from the end of the eighth century, also written in boustrophedon and in which line 3 is written between lines 1 and 2.[1085]

On the other hand, this interpretation does not adequately explain the presence of inscriptions on other media and in other contexts, such as the first five letters of the alphabet incised into one of the steps of the stairway leading up to the fortress at Lachish. The step of the stairway also bore a number of diverse drawings incised into the stone, most notably a roaring lion. This abecedary and its accompanying drawings can be compared with the abecedary and iconographic motifs which appear on the pithoi from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, and which were found in a clearly cultic context.[1086] Together, the combination of abecedary and drawings on the step at Lachish may carry a symbolic, perhaps apotropaic significance, particularly given their placement at the entranceway to an important building. Likewise, at Kuntillet 'Ajrud the abecedaries appear in a context that is clearly not educative: four fragments of abecedaries were written on the same pithos (Pithos A), which also contains a greeting formula inscribed in red ink as well as a number of drawings. Pithos A was found along with another inscribed and decorated pithos in a plastered room that appears from its contents and architecture to have had a cultic function. Given the context of these fragmentary abecedaries, the inscribing of the letters of the alphabet appears to be prompted by a belief in their ritualistic and/or magical function.

The interpretation of these alphabet-inscriptions and their accompanying drawings as apotropaic or ritualistic in function is more credible in light of Hellenistic and Roman period abecedaries in Palestine inscribed on the walls of Jewish burial tombs.[1087] The burial context is an odd aspect of these alphabet-inscriptions, as they appear to have nothing in common with what is typically considered to be an epitaph. A. Bij de Vaate, who has made a study of these later abecedaries, attributes to them an apotropaic

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[1085] Lemaire 1981: 10. Cf. Lemaire 1978:221-235.

[1086] See below, pp. 325-329, for a discussion of the cultic sanctuary and its contents at Kuntillet 'Ajrud.

[1087] The practice of writing down the alphabet on different media (wall of a cave, parchment, ostraca) in Palestine continued down into the Hellenistic and Roman period. This practice was certainly not exclusive to Palestine: the writing down of part of the alphabet or the entire alphabet seems to have been an intercultural phenomenon. There are numerous cases of both Jewish and non-Jewish alphabet-inscriptions from the Graeco-Roman world (see Bij de Vaate 1994: 148-161).

function.[1088] She argues that the practice of using alphabet-inscriptions for apotropaic purposes may have pre-dated its use in this way for burial contexts, just as the practice of inscribing protective amulets apparently pre-dates the more widespread attestation of this phenomenon in Palestine.

A second category of graffiti-inscriptions are those appearing on the walls of burial chambers at Kh. el-Qôm (late eighth century) and Kh. Beit Lei (early sixth century).[1089] The contents as well as the context of these graffiti hint that they were written with the goal of being efficacious in the divine as well as the earthly realm. It is easy to dismiss these as the work of amateur scribblers, but in content, context and function they are similar to the finely carved inscriptions by the entrance-ways of the chamber tombs at Silwan. Inscription No. 3 from Tomb II near Kh. el-Qôm,[1090] a provincial town in the central Hebron Hills, in particular echoes a well known body of Hebrew and Phoenician burial inscriptions that include explicit warnings against disturbing the tomb (e.g. the contemporary Royal Steward inscription from Silwan that ends with the warning: "Cursed be the man who will open this!").[1091] Inscription No. 1 invokes the blessing of Yahweh on an individual named 'Uriyahu, and asks that he be saved from his enemies by (the goddess) Asherah; a deeply incised representation of a human hand below this inscription accentuates the apotropaic character of the inscription.[1092] As has been pointed out by W. Dever and others, Inscription No. 1 belongs to the same genre of cultic and apotropaic inscriptions found on the two pithoi at the site of Kuntillet 'Ajrud in the northern Sinai (see below).

[1088] Bij de Vaate 1995: 148-161.

[1089] The burial cave at Nahal Yishai near En Gedi has also yielded a Hebrew graffito (late eighth/early seventh century), written in black ink on a pillar-like stalactite and containing nine lines (P. Bar-Adon 1975: 226-232). The excavator Bar-Adon believes that the inscription was written by "a trained hand" (p. 227).

[1090] Along with the graffito from Tomb II, excavators found a more formal burial inscription as well as some graffiti on the wall of another tomb (Tomb I) at the site of Kh. el-Qôm, eight and one half miles west of Hebron. An additional inscription incised on stone and bought in Jerusalem in 1967 was also determined to have come from Tomb I (S. Gogel 1998: 13). The other inscriptions from Kh. el-Qôm come from a decanter, a bowl, and a plate (Dever 1970: 139-205). The most recent inscription to be associated with Kh. el-Qôm is incised on a chalk slab (see below, p. 324 and n. 1101).

[1091] This inscription was originally published by Avigad in 1953: 135-152. Cf. Dever 1999: 9*-15*.

[1092] Dever (1999) convincingly argues that the symbol of the human hand on the cave wall at Kh. el-Qom is "an early depiction of the later Islamic khamsa, or 'Hand of Fatima', used as a good-luck sign or apotropaic emblem" (p. 9*).

The graffiti in the more isolated burial cave at Kh. Beit Lei (about 8 km east of ancient Lachish) also seem to derive from a repertoire of burial and cultic inscriptions.[1093] The seven inscriptions found on the walls of the antechamber to this tomb are not alone – they appear along with etchings of three human figures apparently in acts of worship, two boats, and other drawings.[1094] The graffiti here consist of two types – one is comprised of curses, and uses a formula ("whoever erases (this)") that is familiar from other inscriptions in both Phoenician and Hebrew;[1095] the second consists of a collection of prayers and hymns addressed to Yahweh.[1096] One of these latter inscriptions (*BLei* 5) can be taken either as a hymn of praise or confession or as a prophetic oracle mentioning the cities of Judah and Jerusalem.[1097] These inscriptions appear to be the work of literate people (perhaps priests?) who were familiar with a repertoire of burial inscriptions and Yahwistic prayers and hymns, and who were either visiting the cave or had been hired by the cave's owner.

G. Davies has attributed these inscriptions at Khirbet Beit Lei to the "piety" of the rural classes,[1098] but there is little to connect them with the lower levels of Judean society other than their categorization as graffiti and their derivation from an "unpromising provenance." Davies' assumption highlights a common misconception in scholarship about graffiti and the individuals responsible for it in Judean society. Despite the lack of incontrovertible evidence for literacy among the lower levels of Judean society, and despite the obvious connection between the contents of these inscriptions and other inscriptions coming from elite contexts, many scholars still seem to categorize such

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[1093] The range of dates suggested by scholars for this graffito (based on paleographical grounds) extends from the eighth to the late sixth century BCE; the arguments of Cross (1970: 299-306) for an early sixth-century date seem the most persuasive.

[1094] This combination of graffiti inscriptions and drawings (particularly the etching of the three worshippers) is strongly reminiscent of a similar combination of graffiti and drawings (including one of worshippers) found on two pithoi in the cultic sanctuary at Kuntillet ʿAjrud (see more below).

[1095] One of these "warnings" is rather garbled (*BLei* 1), but this may be a deliberate distortion of the text in a manner similar to various magical texts (see Naveh 2001: 194-196).

[1096] For the transcriptions and analysis of the inscriptions from the burial cave of Kh. Beit Lei, see Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* 2005: 125-132.

[1097] For the former view, see Naveh 1963: 74-92; Lemaire 1976: 558-568, and S. Mittmann 1989: 17-23; for the latter view, see Cross 1970: 299-306 and P.D. Miller 1981: 311-332. The text reads [*ʾny*] *yhwh ʾlhykh ʾrsh ʿry yhdh wgʾlty yršlm* "[I] am Yahweh your God. I will treat with favor the cities of Judah, yea, I will redeem Jerusalem" (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* 2005: 128).

[1098] Davies 2002: 281.

graffiti as the handiwork of the "everyman" and to see in its presence, whether explicitly or implicitly, evidence for the spread of literacy to all levels of Judean society.[1099]

Yet the context of these inscriptions as well as their contents indicates their elite provenance. The very existence of tomb caves signals the presence of social stratification; the decoration (including inscriptions) in some of these tombs accentuates the difference between upper and lower levels of Judean society.[1100] Attestations of this kind of well-planned, even monumental tomb architecture appear at sites all around Judah. In addition to the three Iron Age cemeteries in Jerusalem (which comprise half of the 250 rock-cut burial caves found in Judah), excavators have discovered clusters of burial caves near both large and provincial towns, as well as isolated tomb caves. This latter category of burial caves, despite their rural location, nonetheless belongs to the elite strata of society, as "only the well-to-do could afford to purchase a plot of land and cut a tomb cave."[1101]

Dever observes that the workmanship of many of the Kh. el-Qôm tombs is "among the finest ever discovered outside of Jerusalem," and he argues for their identification as elite tombs.[1102] Among the features which suggest these tombs were made and inscribed for members of the Judean elite are: (1) the carved head-niches in the form of a Hathor or "Qudshu-Asherah" wig on the benches, which have parallels in the École Biblique tomb in Jerusalem;[1103] and (2) a chalk slab that is probably from the site and that reads "Bless your stonecutter(s); in this (i.e., the tomb) will rest the elders."[1104] Even in the smaller urban centers of Judah, therefore, lesser members of the Judean elite were having their final resting places magically empowered with benedictions, dedications (to deities), and warnings against those who would disturb the tomb.

Some of these attestations of graffiti may be linked to state rather than private auspices. That state sponsorship of cultic writing during the Iron II period did not confine itself to the cultic activity taking place at the capital is suggested by the following

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[1099] See, for example, Demsky 1988: 15; Millard 1987: 25-26; and Schniedewind 2004: 104-106.
[1100] Hopkins 1996: 121-139.
[1101] Barkay 1992a: 359.
[1102] Dever 1999: 10*.
[1103] *Ibid*, 9*. Dever cites Barkay and Kloner as being in agreement with him.
[1104] This chalk slab is now in a private collection and was recently published by Deutsch and Heltzer (1994: 27-30). These two epigraphers, as well as Dever (1999: 9* and 14*, note 8) agree that the chalk slab must have come from Kh. el- Qôm.

trend: this is the phenomenon consisting of a small concentration of cultic and literate activity, most likely associated with priests, at various (often) out-of-the-way locations in the southern Levantine world. It has been pointed out in the previous chapter how small, single-room shrines provide the most obvious evidence for cultic activity in the Iron Age (in contrast with the Late Bronze Age) in Moab and Ammon in particular. This pattern seems to hold true for Judah as well, particularly at sites along the southern (Arad) and western (Lachish) frontiers.[1105]

Of particular interest to this discussion are those nodes of cultic and literate activity taking place at remote and/or desert locations in the Sinai, Transjordan, and Negev. Kuntillet 'Ajrud in the northern Sinai, as well as Horvat 'Uza and Horvat Qitmit in the Judean Negev, in particular appear to represent wayside cultic places similar to the later phenomenon of Nabataean temples which serviced the caravans. The finds from these sites reflect the culturally diverse backgrounds of the various peoples engaged in the Arabian trade. Deir 'Alla in the central Jordan Valley, along with Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Horvat 'Uza, also appear to represent something more – sites where religious literary texts (wisdom texts, prophetic texts) or cultic formulations (blessings, theophanies?) were being reproduced and transmitted. Furthermore, Deir 'Alla and Kuntillet 'Ajrud are significant in the matter of texts for public display (albeit in a more religious/economic architectural context than in an explicitly political one). The inscriptions elevated on plaster in their respective cultic rooms are both iconic and "international" in orientation (as traders and travelers visited these sites alongside locals).

The small and isolated Iron Age site of Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman) is situated on top of a hill in the desert of northern Sinai. This site, although relatively short-lived (mid-ninth through mid-eighth century BCE),[1106] was an important crossroads and a way station for travelers, particularly those traveling on the Darb el-Ghazza, a road

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[1105] In addition to the discovery of what appear to be Judean sanctuaries at Lachish and Arad, the name "Yahweh" occurs on many of the ostraca found at both sites. In one of the Arad ostraca it is said of someone that "he is in the house of Yahweh." Bamah installations have been unearthed at a variety of Judean sites, including near the gates of the Judean fortresses of 'Uza, Radum, Tel Sheva, and Vered Jericho (Stern 2001: 201-203).

[1106] This span of dates for the occupation of the site is provided by Z. Meshel (1978), who excavated the site over three short seasons in 1975 and 1976.

linking Raphia and Gaza on the Mediterranean coast with Elat on the Gulf of Aqaba.[1107]
Its superficial resemblance to an ancient fortress is belied by its lack of casemate walls.
Although Kuntillet ʿAjrud was probably linked to the kingdom of Israel, the site lies in
closer geographic proximity to Judah, and has yielded graffiti-inscriptions that are quite
similar in content to the later clusters of graffiti found in the burial chambers of Kh. el-
Qôm (late eighth century) and Kh. Beit Lei (seventh-early sixth centuries). The corpus at
Kuntillet ʿAjrud consists of benedictions and dedications inscribed on pithoi, on plaster,
and on other objects in a certain "building A" which also contained benches on which
dedicated offerings were apparently placed. The experts have settled on the early eighth
century BCE as the date for this corpus, based on their paleography.[1108]

The peculiar combination of artifacts and architecture hints at a function that is
distinctive, a function that combines a religious with an economic (and perhaps military)
character. Comparisons with other small and isolated sites where apparent cultic
sanctuaries existed within the context of an industrial complex (Deir ʿAlla) or a fortified
trading center (Horvat ʿUza, Horvat Qitmit) suggests that the site served a dual purpose
as the location of a sanctuary, with its attendant religious rituals, and as a fortified rest-
stop for traders and travelers along one of the major commercial routes in the region.[1109]

Given the unusual function of the site, the inscriptions in building A as well as
their architectural context merit closer analysis. They were incised in Phoenician and
Paleo-Hebrew on stone and clay vessels, and written in red or black ink either on wall-
plaster or on the outside of storage jars (pithoi). All of these inscriptions, seemingly
without exception, appear to be cultic in nature.[1110] Two groups of inscriptions are of
particular interest: the inscriptions written on two large pithoi, alongside a number of
drawings, and the inscriptions written on plaster in black or red ink. On the two pithoi
("Pithos 1" = *KAjr* 18; "Pithos 2" = *KAjr* 19-21), numerous figures as well as depictions

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[1107] Apart from its location on an important crossroads, the character of the site as a way-station for traders
and travelers is demonstrated by the variety of spellings represented in the inscriptions (most are northern)
and by the variety of deities mentioned (including Asherah, Baʿal, El, and Yahweh).

[1108] See the latest compendium of Hebrew inscriptions (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 279. Cf. Fantalkin and
Finkelstein 2006: 24.

[1109] Cf. B. Schmidt 2002: 103.

[1110] For the inscriptions on the two pithoi and the plaster, see below. The inscriptions on the rims of the
large bowls appear to be dedicatory in nature, e.g. *KAjr* 9, which consists of a dedicatory inscription and
the invocation of a blessing from Yahweh (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 283-4).

of stylized animals and trees (motifs known from other Near Eastern peoples) comprise the accompanying drawings, which borrow from a common stock of Syrian, Egyptian, and Phoenician motifs.[1111]

Pithos 1 features a long formula of two lines, written in red ink (*KAjr* 18); below the inscription appear two standing figures (with a third figure to the right, seated and playing a musical instrument). The beginning of this inscription corresponds to well-attested formulas for introducing letters or messages; the second part of the inscription is comprised of a benediction like one finds in lines 2-3 of the inscription from Kh. el-Qôm. This latter portion of the inscription clearly refers to Yahweh and his consort Asherah, the Canaanite goddess (and not merely to her symbol); the two standing figures may be representations of these deities.[1112] On a part of a fragment from Pithos 2, as many as four incomplete abecedaries and a couple of random words (*KAjr* 19B) are joined by an inscription (*KAjr* 19A) in red ink[1113] bearing a blessing of the kind found on Pithos 1 (*KAjr* 18).[1114] A blessing formula (*KAjr* 20) consisting of three lines appears near the shoulder of the same jar; below and to the left of the blessing is a drawing of a group of supplicating figures adjoining a list of personal names (*KAjr* 21).

There has been much debate over the extent to which the drawings and inscriptions on Pithoi 1 and 2 are integrated; given the probability that building A represents a small sanctuary where religious rituals were carried out (probably by a staff of priests or some kind of cultic functionaries),[1115] the interpretation made by B. Schmidt of the drawings and inscriptions on the pithoi as integrated scenes displaying interconnected images and texts (in particular the image and text of Yahweh and the

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[1111] For the iconography of the drawings, see P. Beck 2002: 203-222; 1982: 3-86.

[1112] Cf. B. Schmidt 2002: 91-125 and A. Soumeka 2002: 94.

[1113] According to Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* (2005: 293), *KAjr* 19A was written first, as one of the abecedaries (*KAjr* 19B.2) runs over several of the letters in *KAjr* 19A, and as the abecedaries were written in a different hand; *KAjr* 19 is at least in part a palimpsest, therefore.

[1114] The greeting formulae on Pithos 2 strikingly parallels one in a Phoenician letter from Saqqara, "in which this greeting formula is followed by a question concerning well being, as in the case of 'Ajrud's inscription" (Soumeka 2002: 92). The greeting is also familiar from Akkadian and Ugaritic. Furthermore, the blessing on Pithos 1 (*brkt 'tkm lyhwh šmrn wl'šrth* "I bless you by Yahweh of Samaria and by his Asherah") and Pithos 2 (*brktk l[y]hwh tmn wl'šrth* "I bless you by [Ya]weh of Teman and by his Asherah") resemble the blessings in the Arad ostraca nos. 16, 21 and 40. Obviously, while the inscriptions at Kuntillet 'Ajrud "may have been influenced by letters – or perhaps by blessings used in other contexts – they are not letters" (Emerton 2001: 8).

[1115] The phenomenon of priestly graffiti is a common one in Egypt, particularly during the New Kingdom era, as was noted in Chapter 2. See also A. Peden 2001, esp. pp. 290-293.

goddess Asherah) is quite plausible. According to Schmidt's analysis, the inscriptions and drawings on these pithoi were not random scrawlings and sketches: they were rendered together *deliberately* by the ancient artist/scribe to create "a unified field of meaning … designed to portray the deities Yahweh and Asherah in their respective composite forms (or *Mischwesen*) as beings of supra human power."[1116] The association of the written blessings with the visual representations ensured the efficacy of the blessings by, in a sense, conjuring the very presence of the deities invoked.[1117]

The integration of text and image within the context of the individual pithoi is complemented at Kuntillet 'Ajrud by an interconnection of text and architecture, as exhibited by the group of inscriptions written in black or red ink on plaster. One such inscription is *KAjr* 14, which consists of a fragmentary plaster inscription, written in black ink, which was found in the debris in the "bench room."[1118] It can be presumed that the text was originally displayed on the wall of the room, like the plaster inscription from Tel Deir 'Alla. The text of the inscription mentions Yahweh of Teman and Asherah and appears to be a blessing/dedicatory inscription. *KAjr* 15, another fragmentary plaster inscription, was probably originally set on the jamb of the entrance to a long storeroom at the western end of the main building.[1119] This particular text describes a theophany, i.e. "the appearance of the deity as a divine warrior marching to holy war, as nature convulses."[1120] As noted by Schmidt, the particular confluence of elements at Kuntillet

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[1116] Schmidt 2002: 98. Schmidt demonstrates that the integration of text and image as it occurs on the pithoi from Kuntillet 'Ajrud is an artistic technique seen also in Egypt but rendered in a less sophisticated and a bit more sloppy form. It should be noted here that the drawings at Kuntillet 'Ajrud exhibit other characteristics suggesting a strong Egyptian influence: P. Beck (1982: 3-68), in her analysis of the Pithoi 1 and 2 drawings, has described the numerous parallels and influences of Egypt and north Syria.

[1117] The finds at Kuntillet 'Ajrud certainly do not represent the only manifestation of this technique in the Levant from a cultic or magical context. Two seventh century BCE incantation inscriptions from Arslan Tash in Upper Syria consist of magical texts inscribed on two limestone plaques featuring holes on the top, which may indicate that they were hung by these holes to protect a house or its owner. The texts are written beside and on top of various malevolent deities and demon figures. The contents of both inscriptions, i.e. spells against devils and illnesses, relate closely to the figures on which they are superimposed. See Y. Avishur 2000: 201-223 (for the first Arslan Tash inscription) and pp. 225-240 (for the second Arslan Tash inscription).

[1118] Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* 2005: 285-286. The script of this inscription is Phoenician, whereas the language is Hebrew.

[1119] *Ibid*, 286-289. Again, the script is Phoenician and the language is Hebrew. There is also a similar inscription, *KAjr* 13, which was discovered *in situ* on the north jamb of the entrance leading from the bench room to the inner courtyard – it is sadly too faded to be legible.

[1120] *Ibid*, 287. Cf. Soumeka's analysis of this inscription as a theophany (2002: 86-87). She terms it a "theophanic hymn" and describes the form of the text as "poetic" and its character as prophetic.

'Ajrud – the integrated text and images, the presence of dedications and blessings, votive bowls dedicated to the god(s), and benches for the placement of offerings – is roughly analogous to the common use of art and writing together in Egypt to transform contexts (such as temples and tombs) ritually and magically into cosmically charged settings.[1121]

As in Egypt, the display of integrated texts and images at this cultic sanctuary is likely to have been sponsored by the state. The state in this case was undoubtedly Israel, given the fact that Israel appears to have re-asserted its control over the southern trade routes in the late ninth/early eighth centuries, and that Kunillet 'Ajrud's inscriptions, drawings, and pottery are clearly influenced by northern (Phoenician/Samarian) traditions. Another possible indication that the graffiti and wall paintings from this site were officially commissioned is the presence of a seated figure with a lotus flower on one of the walls of the sanctuary. Based on her study of material related to the figure of the ruler in the art of Palestine from the third millennium onward, P. Beck has argued that this figure may be interpreted as a king, perhaps the king of Israel.[1122]

The presence of inscriptions on plaster in or near a room with benches that possessed a clearly cultic purpose, was situated within the context of an isolated site, and may have been officially commissioned, immediately brings to mind the phenomenon of Deir 'Alla. The character of this small cultic sanctuary with its plastered benches and plaster inscription has been described in detail in the previous chapter (Chapter 4), but it is relevant briefly to discuss a few of the more significant points of resemblance between the two sites and their respective cultic spaces. Like Kuntillet 'Ajrud, Deir 'Alla in the central Jordan Valley is a settlement seemingly dedicated to practical functions, yet nonetheless containing a small chamber with a clear cultic character, in the form of a literary inscription on plaster in red and black ink, describing a vision of the "seer" Balaam. (Like the inscriptions at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, the Deir 'Alla inscription has been dated to the early eighth century BCE.) The plaster inscriptions at both sites were displayed on walls (or door jambs) in or near a room containing plastered benches, which

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[1121] Schmidt 2002: 112-122.
[1122] Beck 2002: 218.

were likely used for the placement of offerings.[1123] The resemblance does not end there: close to the Balaam text are drawings, most notably a drawing of a sphinx adjacent to the upper left corner of the inscription. The fact that these texts were evidently intended for public display and that both of the rooms and/or buildings in which they were displayed served as sanctuaries facilitating the religious observances of locals and traders who traveled to these sites underscore the iconic and "international" character of these two cultic places.

Two other sites, dating at least a century later and associated with the Judean state, also exhibit striking parallels to Kuntillet ʿAjrud. Both Horvat ʿUza and Horvat Qitmit date to the seventh through early sixth centuries BCE, are located in remote desert locations (the Judean Negev), and feature inscriptions of a cultic and/or literary nature. The Negev site of Horvat Qitmit is a semi-isolated site, located 5 km to the southeast of Tel Malhata and about 10 km northeast of Tel ʿAroʿer. Excavations revealed a sanctuary consisting of a circular altar and a tripartite building facing open-air enclosures. There was also an auxiliary building with standing stones in the forecourt. Each enclosure of the tripartite building contained a podium around three feet high, which may have supported an idol or some other sacred object. Sacrificial animals appear to have been burnt at the altar and in the chambers. A number of ostraca bearing the names of individuals as well as the name of the Edomite god Qaus were uncovered at the site. The site also yielded a quantity of figurines, as well as what appear to have been relief-decorated cultic stands.[1124] The shrine at Horvat Qitmit, with its three identically sized rooms and podiums, suggests that a grouping of deities may have been worshipped there.[1125]

Finkelstein has convincingly argued that the site, founded in the seventh century, represented a wayside shrine on one of the main routes of the Arabian trade, which

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[1123] The excavators of Deir ʿAlla have suggested that one of the benches (the south bench) in the room with the plaster inscription may have been used for the placement of offerings (M. Ibrahim and G. van der Kooij 1991: 20-21).

[1124] Beck's analysis of the cult objects from the site (1993: 231-236) has shown that the art of Horvat Qitmit drew from a mélange of southern Levantine sources, including Syro-Palestinian motifs, various Transjordanian traditions, and even Phoenician elements. In this respect, the iconography is comparable to that found at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, which demonstrates a similar mixture of artistic influences.

[1125] K. Hoglund 1994: 340-341, 346.

connected Arabia via Edom and the Beer-sheba Valley with Philistia.[1126] The cultural

mix evident in the material culture of the site reflects the different cultures of the people

who were active in the southern trade routes.[1127] As an isolated caravan cult place,

Horvat Qitmit shows strong parallels with Kuntillet 'Ajrud; unlike the latter site,

however, it seems to have functioned solely as a shrine.[1128] Although the shrine at Qitmit

may have been associated with an official Judean fortress, it is clear that a mixture of

peoples, including Judeans, worshipped Qaus and possibly other deities there.[1129]

The second of the two Negevite sites treated here is Horvat 'Uza (Khirbet

Ghazzeh), the site of a Judean fortress during the seventh century that was destroyed at

the beginning of the sixth century. This relatively isolated site, located about 10 km

southeast of Tel Arad in the Negev, has yielded a remarkable find: among the thirty-eight

inscriptions[1130] uncovered there is a literary inscription written in ink on a burnished bowl

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[1126] Finkelstein 1995: 146 and 1992: 156-170.

[1127] Finkelstein 1992: 162. Cf. Bienkowski and van der Steen 2001: 21-47.

[1128] Whereas part of the complex at Kuntillet 'Ajrud appears to have been dedicated to storage, rather than to a sanctuary, Horvat Qitmit lacks storage facilities. Kuntillet 'Ajrud also yielded a large number of storage vessels, while Horvat Qitmit did not. Finkelstein (1992) suggests that these dissimilarities in the finds of the two sites can be explained by their relative isolation: Kuntillet 'Ajrud was completely isolated from the nearest contemporaneous sites, which made it "a combination of a cult place and a road station with storage rooms," whereas Horvat Qitmit was less isolated and probably relied on the storage facilities located in nearby urban centers (p. 163).

[1129] The excavator of Horvat Qitmit has defined the site as an Edomite shrine on the basis of the material culture found at the site, and particularly on the discovery of so-called "Edomite" pottery (I. Beit-Arieh 1995: 314-315). But given that the knowledge of Edomite material culture in the Iron Age II is based on a small number of sites, and that information about the origin and distribution of "Edomite" pottery is still quite limited, it is too hasty to identify Horvat Qitmit as specifically "Edomite." The fact that the "Edomite" vessels from Horvat Qitmit were made in the close vicinity of the site instead indicates "the strong cultural influence of southern Transjordan on the local population of the Judahite southern steppe" (Finkelstein 1995: 141). Furthermore, by "Edomite" pottery, Beit-Arieh means the painted pottery characteristic of Buseirah and other sites in Edom. But this pottery is not only found at sites throughout the north-western Negev, and it is *not* found at all sites in Edom, "so it is misleading to call it *characteristically* Edomite" (P. Bienkowski and L. Sedman 2001: 319). Bienkowski has observed that "there is insufficient evidence to indicate that that this pottery was confined to a specific ethnic group, rather than being the standard Iron II … painted pottery of an area extending beyond Edom proper." He proposes a new term for this pottery: "Buseirah painted ware" (1995: 51; cf. Bienkowski and Sedman 2001: 319). In light of these observations, it makes sense to agree with Finkelstein that the "Edomite" pottery showing up at Horvat Qitmit should be viewed as a "geographical-cultural occurrence, rather than as an ethnic phenomenon" (1995: 141; cf. Finkelstein 1992: 157 and Bienkowski and Sedman 2001: 310-325). In other words, the so-called "Edomite" elements at Qitmit "may not have involved people from Edom at all, but were merely aspects of a material culture shared between southern Transjordan and parts of the Negev and southern Judah" (Bienkowski and Sedman 2001: 321).

[1130] Most of these inscriptions are in Hebrew, although one is in Edomite, and one apparently in Aramaic (I. Beit-Arieh and B. Cresson 1985: 96-101). Besides *Uza* 2, another interesting set of inscriptions are those that appear to have been written originally on an intact jar that was possibly intended for display (*Uza* 3).

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and dating to the second half of the seventh century BCE (*Uza* 2).[1131] The lack of any obvious prose particles suggests that the text is poetic, and the scribal hand has been described as "elegant" as well as "flowing" and "skilled."[1132] Even though some of its lines are faded and remain indecipherable, the text appears to be "self-contained," i.e. "a poetic composition standing independently by itself."[1133] V. Sasson recently has argued, on the basis of a passage in Job (27:10, 12-16) which he views as a parallel text, that *Uza* 2 is a type of wisdom text along the same lines as Job. Sasson's reading calls for the first segment of the ostracon (ll. 1-8) to speak of "righteousness, peace, and attaining old age," whereas the second segment (ll. 9-13) refers to "life violently cut short," which probably alludes to the fate of those who afflict those addressed in the text.[1134] He believes that this text originated in an "Edomite scribal Yahwistic circle, or community."

Whether or not he is correct about the classification of the language of the text (other experts view the language as Hebrew),[1135] the ostracon's discovery indicates the presence of one or more scribes with a particularly high level of expertise in out-of-the-way places who were apparently engaged in the transmission of sophisticated literary texts. Perhaps this circle had something to do with the formulation of the provincial scribal tradition that is evident in the letters from the nearby site of Arad (in contrast with the Jerusalemite tradition represented in the Lachish Letters). Given the negative tenor of the inscription (i.e. its prediction of doom on some unnamed enemy), this circle may have

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The inscriptions appear on opposite sides of the jar and contain lists of names arranged in each case in identical order: from "first" to "fourth" (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 527-539).

[1131] Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 521-527. Cf. V. Sasson (2005: 602) for this date, which has been determined on both stratigraphic and paleographic grounds. *Uza* 2 was discovered in the front chamber of the gate in Stratum IV (Beit-Arieh 1993: 55-65).

[1132] See Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 521 and Sasson 2005: 602. The literary quality of the ostracon is also evident in "its vocabulary, the use of the long forms of suffixes on nouns and verbs (e.g., *lšntkh*, line 2; *ht'r'rth*, line 9), and the setting of the text (i.e., with wide margins)" (Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. 2005: 521).

[1133] Sasson 2005: 612. There is some disagreement as to the classification of the language of this text. Cross, in an appendix to Beit-Arieh's publication of the ostracon (1993: 55-63; appendix pp. 64-65), argued that the language is Hebrew, and re-affirmed this view several years later (2000: 111-113). Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*. (2005: 521-527) agrees with Cross's assessment of the language of the inscription. Sasson (2005), on the other hand, believes the language to be Edomite, even though he acknowledges that "much of the vocabulary and syntax seem similar to Biblical Hebrew" (p. 612). Part of the justification for his classification is based on the excavator's identification of the site as Edomite, an identification that is in dispute. In his notes on the text, he appears to rely heavily on the Moabite dialect (and to a lesser extent on biblical Hebrew and Arabic) in his translation of the text, but his primary frame of reference for his translation is Job 27:10, 12-16, which he views as a parallel text.

[1134] Sasson 2005: 611.

[1135] See n. 1133 above.

been involved in a state-directed effort of producing propaganda aimed at another state (in this case, this state would probably have been Edom).

Conclusion

These concluding pages will provide a provisional historical sketch of the processes contributing to Judah's emergence as an "ethnicizing state," and will dwell in particular on the important role played by Judah's expanding elite class in the exertion of state hegemony. Following this sketch, the focus of these pages will narrow onto how one subset of this elite class, the scribes, through their active and growing participation in Judah's development as a state, found their services increasingly in demand by the other Judean elites. The resultant extension of writing into the private sphere and the proliferation of scribal activity that this signified may hold the key as to why Iron II Judah possessed a particularly fertile climate for the formation of written traditions that served as sources for the composition of biblical texts in later periods.

Judah's early development as a polity was dictated by the needs of the northern state of Israel. Under the diplomatic and military domination of the Omrides in Samaria, a "managerial elite" responded to the stressful conditions occasioned by the political-military raid of the Egyptians in the late tenth century and the fluctuating environmental conditions by overseeing the construction of fortified settlements and storage complexes in the Shephelah foothills and the Beersheba Valley. Political domination by a more powerful state (i.e. Israel) explains the organization of the Judean region during the ninth and eighth centuries around a settlement system comprised of Lachish (situated on the southeast frontier facing Egypt), Arad and other desert fortresses, and small towns like Beersheba with storehouse complexes, which were installed to guard the borders against Egypt and to function as central places for society and its economy. The interest taken by Israel in the region also reflects its desire to control trade routes in the Beersheba Valley after the decline of the Tel Masos chiefdom.

What attestations of writing exist during this period (e.g., the ninth century administrative ostraca from Arad) primarily point to the activity of a small corps of scribes engaged in serving the administrative and economic needs of this settlement system. Although scribal knowledge pertaining to the composition of royal inscriptions

was clearly in circulation during this period, as witnessed by the mid-ninth—early eighth century monumental inscriptions from neighboring Moab, Ammon, and Aram-Damascus (the latter found at Tel Dan in Israel), it seems unlikely that such knowledge would have been required in the Shephelah and Beersheba Valley in this ninth century period. If the scenario posited above is correct and this region was closely controlled by Israel, then it is difficult to imagine the ruling dynasty of this polity would have welcomed an assertion of state hegemony (with all that assertion implied vis-à-vis other states) to be so publicly displayed.

No more than a small group of scribes with fairly specialized skills would have been required to meet the administrative needs of the nascent polity which emerged in the Judean Hills region at the same time as the more developed settlement system was being established to the south. Given that Samarian control and/or influence probably extended to this region of Judah as well as in the south,[1136] it is possible that some basic methods of archiving might have been transmitted to the Jerusalemite scribal community from Samaria, as suggested by the recent discovery of uninscribed bullae in Jerusalem featuring Phoenician/Samarian iconographic motifs and dating to the late ninth or early eighth century BCE. It is also not impossible that the ruling dynasty in this hill country region may have commissioned the composition and erection of monumental inscriptions, even though this polity lacked most of the characteristics that would signify statehood; to the east, Mesha had sponsored just such a project, despite the fact that his assertions of hegemony over a Moabite state were yet to be fully realized.

The skills learned and practiced by the scribes in Jerusalem during this early eighth century period were called upon with increasing frequency as this polity's administrative apparatus became more and more developed over the course of the eighth century. As Israel's power waned from at least the mid-eighth century onward, this highland polity was able to establish Jerusalem as the political, economic, and social locus point for the entire Judean region. If competition existed between this hill country polity and the settlement system to the south, this came to an end as the southern region was subsumed by the growing power of the dynasty ruling from Jerusalem.

[1136] The contents of the mid-ninth century Tel Dan inscription, for example, reveal that the king of Judah was in alliance with the king of Israel against Aram-Damascus during this early Iron IIA period (A. Biran and J. Naveh 1995: 13).

The state hegemonic process in Judah over the course of the late eighth through early sixth centuries was particularly impacted by the specific historical conditions related to Assyrian imperialism. As early as the second half of the eighth century, two major events stemming from Assyria's involvement in the Levant had the effect of accelerating Judah's development into a state, enabling it to outstrip its Transjordanian neighbors to the east and south in terms of its level of organization. The first event was the integration of Judah into the Assyrian economic sphere during the 730s. This integration enabled Judah, under Assyrian auspices, to prosper directly from Judah's participation in the southern trade network. The Transjordanian states were also integrated into Assyria's regional economy during this period, but their state apparatuses do not appear to have achieved the same level of organization as that of Judah. This can be attributed to the fact that Judah was particularly well situated for controlling a number of important trade routes. That Judah was able to achieve a higher level of prosperity and organization is also due to the fact that its topography and climate were better suited for the production of a number of agropastoral resources, such as wine and olive oil.

The second event to accelerate Judah's development as a state was the influx of refugees from the north following the destruction of Samaria by the Assyrians in 722/721 BCE. This event had a profound demographic effect on Jerusalem: its population increased sharply and the city itself expanded.[1137] This influx would have had a profound cultural impact as well, as it is very likely that among the ranks of the northern refugees were members of Samaria's elite, including scribes and priests. Jerusalem was therefore the direct recipient of an infusion of expertise, both scribal and cultic, by the end of the eighth century.[1138]

[1137] As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the expansion of Jerusalem and the growth in its population can also be attributed to another after-effect of Assyrian activity in the region: the wave of refugees that probably fled the Shephelah following the destruction of its main sites by Sennacherib's forces in 701 BCE.
[1138] After this chapter was completed, an article written by Na'aman (2007: 21-56) appeared in which this scholar made a rather convincing case *against* the notion that the Iron II population growth in Jerusalem and its environs could be attributed to a mass immigration of northern refugees fleeing the Assyrian conquest of Samaria in 720 BCE. Na'aman's summation of the relevant data poses a serious challenge to the thesis of Broshi and Finkelstein (1992: 51-52), Finkelstein and Silberman (2006: 135-136), and Schniedewind (2004: 68-73, 94-95) that Judah opened its gates to a significant quantity of fugitives at the end of the eighth century BCE, who subsequently became regular citizens. It will be interesting to follow what will likely be a very lively debate revolving around Na'aman's hypothesis that the growth of the city of Jerusalem instead was gradual, starting in the ninth century and accelerating in the eighth century BCE. His view does not necessarily undermine one of the primary contentions of this chapter; *viz.*, that Judah was

What may have had more impact in terms of reordering the political, economic, and social life of Judah were the after-effects of Hezekiah's resistance to the Assyrian threat, and of Assyria's subsequent invasion. These effects involved more than a greater drive towards centralization on the part of the royal administration; as is argued below, they set the stage for the emergence of a new set of elite identities, at least partially detached from the networks of kinship and locality. Both biblical and Assyrian accounts mention Judah's rendering of a large tribute and the handing over of a huge number of prisoners to Assyria. The depopulation of the countryside occasioned by the Assyrians' destruction of much of the Shephelah and Beersheba Valley region was probably magnified therefore by the loss of thousands more of Judah's population thanks to the terms under which Hezekiah was permitted to stay in power over an unharmed capital city. This development challenging would have had the effect of at least partially severing local kinship and community ties in rural areas. Moreover, the reestablishment of kinship and community bonds was retarded by the state-engineered settlement program in the Shephelah, which is attested in the archaeological record dating to the first half of the seventh century.

Moreover, the obligation of tribute (both immediately following the invasion and on subsequent occasions) would have required the generation of disposable resources. Records of tribute from Judah suggest the delivery of a variety of precious goods, including ivory, horses, precious metals and stones, and textiles.[1139] Judah would have had to engage in interregional exchange in order to procure these items, as they were not indigenous to the region. The necessity of generating disposable resources in order to

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a direct recipient of the scribal methods and textual types developed in Phoenicia and Israel. Israel's long cultural and political domination of Judah is undisputed; during the nearly two centuries of this domination, the scribal institution in Samaria likely trained many of the scribes that ended up working for the royal dynasty in Judah. Moreover, as Na'aman himself acknowledges (pp. 36-37), there may still have been an influx of refugees into Judah and especially Jerusalem from the southern hills of Samaria in advance of the Sargon II's conquest, although this immigration was perhaps less substantial than is argued in this chapter and by the scholars cited above.

[1139] See, for example, Sennacherib's Hexagonal Prism (ca. 689 BCE), which contains an account of Sennacherib's campaign against Judah and Phoenicia as well as a list of the tribute items rendered by Judah to the Assyrians (ii 37-iii 49 in J. Pritchard 1969: 287-288). Even as early as the 728 BCE, the king of Judah is listed in a building inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III as a giver of tribute (*madattu*), along with the kings of Moab, Ammon, and Edom (H. Tadmor 1994: 170-171; cf. J. Pritchard 1969: 300). A later Assyrian source (Prism B) mentions that Manasseh of Judah (697/6-641 BCE) was among the western vassals mobilized by Esarhaddon to transport building materials for the construction of his palace at Nineveh (Borger 1956: 60; line 55; cf. J. Pritchard 1969: 291).

accomplish these types of exchanges, together with the resettlement of the areas depopulated as a result of Sennacherib's campaign, would have necessitated the consolidation of land and the disenfranchisement of subsistence farmers in the face of intensified "cash crop" (olive oil and wine) production for export.[1140] It seems certain that such a process would have opened up new opportunities for a rising elite class, who would have been put in place as managers of these consolidated land holdings, and who were at least partially disconnected from kin- and locality-based loyalties.[1141]

The development of such distinct elite identities may have been facilitated and encouraged by two more processes taking place in Judah at approximately the same time (late eighth through early sixth centuries), and also predicated on the historical conditions of Neo-Assyrian imperialism. The first was the opportunity of trade routes that was occasioned by the integration of Judah into the Assyrian region economy beginning in the 730s (as mentioned above). After being dramatically interrupted by Sennacherib's campaign in 701, Judah's involvement in the trading routes of the Beersheba Valley, the Buqeʻa and the southern Jordan Valley resumed during the early seventh century. Judah's role as one of the four integrated zones of production in the seventh century economic system established under Assyrian auspices (but driven by the expanding Egyptian market) led to its expansion into several un-/under-exploited regions during this period, and steered it towards an intensification of grain production in those areas. Judah's greatest era of prosperity dates to this seventh century, thanks to the new Assyrian policy of direct intervention in the south and the resultant diversion of the main trade route to Edom and southern Judah. This escalation in trading activity called for the involvement of a growing number of merchants whose wealth and status would likely have been based more on their business acumen than on their position within a kinship group.

The second process connected with Assyrian imperialism that would have contributed to the rise of a new elite class was the militarization of Judah over the course

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[1140] As has been demonstrated previously in this chapter (pp. 282-284), there is increasing evidence for just such an intensification of agricultural resources in Judah over the course of the seventh century.
[1141] For kinship as an organizing concept in the Levant, see Chapter 4: 238-240. For a similar process in Israel, whereby a new class of landowners may have acquired their estates outside of the clan framework, see Chapter 4: 239-241. For the emergence of new elite identities in the Transjordan, see Chapter 4: 224-225.

of the late Iron II period.[1142] The initial impetus for this process in the late eighth century was probably the direct threat of Assyrian invasion, a threat that materialized in the 701 campaign of Sennacherib against Judah during the region of Hezekiah. The archaeological record is vague about the exact nature of Hezekiah's preparations for resistance, but the fortification of several towns in Judah (particularly in the Shephelah) may be connected to the measures taken for war. Preparations likely included the setting up or streamlining of royal supply systems from the countryside to Jerusalem and other major cities (a process possibly reflected in the mass-production of large storage jars sealed with the king's seal, *lmlk*, and coming from four different regions of Judah), and the conscription of individuals for military service.

The militarization of Judah would have only intensified after Sennacherib's successfully campaign, as Judah was forced to enter into a military alliance with Assyria.[1143] By the early sixth century, Judah possessed an established and active military infrastructure, complete with a network of city garrisons as well as more remote outposts, as indicated by the archaeological and epigraphic evidence (including military communiqués written in ostraca) from Lachish and Arad, both of which were seats of government responsible for nearby cities and fortresses.[1144] Although the assignment of important military positions would very likely have been based on kin networks (particularly on those networks closely associated with the royal family), the growing need for military officers would have opened up opportunities for a new group of elite whose selection would not have necessarily been dictated by kin and locality networks.[1145] In sum, the primary expressions of state hegemony that characterize Judah in the historical and archaeological record for the late Iron II period – state administrative

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[1142] For a discussion of the militarization of Israel and the Transjordan during the Neo-Assyrian era, see Chapter 4: 222-224.

[1143] Manasseh of Judah, for example, was required to participate in Ashurbanipal's campaign to Egypt in 667 BCE (M. Sterck 1916: 138, line 25). The account of the Egyptian campaign is found in the Rassam Cylinder, but the list of kings, including Manasseh (*Mi-in-si-e*) king of Judah (*Ia-ú-di*), who were required to bring "heavy gifts" (*tâmartu*) and to aid Ashurbanipal in this campaign is contained in the text of Cylinder C (J. Pritchard 1969: 294).

[1144] The resources needed to support an expanding military infrastructure, as dictated by the demands of the military alliance with Assyria, would have also necessitated the generation of disposable resources, and therefore would have contributed to the intensification of agropastoral production and land consolidation already mentioned above.

[1145] See Routledge (2004: 209) for this observation, which he makes vis-à-vis the establishment of a military infrastructure in Moab.

expansion, agricultural intensification, increased production for trade, and the creation of "detached" elite identities involved in the hegemonic process – were not only all interconnected, but were also specifically related to the conditions of Assyria's involvement in the Levant.

What remains to be discussed in these concluding pages is the increasing participation of the scribal elite in this hegemonic process: i.e., how, through their written products, they both asserted state hegemony and engaged in practices that were predicated on the existence of the Judean state as a totality. Of particular interest is the effect that this increasing activity of scribes in the public (i.e. royal administrative) sphere had on the extension of writing practices to the private (but still elite) sphere. It will also be demonstrated how, in turn, the shape and numbers of this scribal class were profoundly affected by their involvement in the state hegemonic process, particularly as this process related to the conditions of Assyrian imperialism (as discussed above).

In the use of writing to articulate Judah's hegemony as a state, Jerusalem's scribal community was profoundly influenced by Israel's scribal establishment, and never more so than when waves of refugees from Israel (particularly the Samarian region) arrived in Jerusalem following the dissolution of Israel as a state. This influx would not only have swelled the ranks of Jerusalem's scribal and priestly community, but it would have introduced, through these experts, the most sophisticated scribal conventions and textual types available in the Levant during that time. Although it is possible that Judah's ruling elite had commissioned the writing and erecting of royal inscriptions back in the late ninth and/or early eighth centuries, when Judah was still a small highland polity under Israel's domination and/or influence, the infusion of scribal knowledge in the late eighth century would have almost guaranteed that such inscriptions were composed and set up on behalf of Judah's king.[1146]

Knowledge of archival methods, if not already transmitted to Jerusalem's scribes during the Iron IIA period (late tenth—ca. 800 BCE), would have passed to Judah's scribal community at this time. The continuous saga of destruction and rebuilding in Jerusalem over the millennia has rendered unlikely the survival of such archival

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[1146] As noted earlier in this chapter, fragments of two monumental inscriptions dating to a period between the late eighth century and ca. 700 BCE have been found in Jerusalem. In all likelihood, these fragments come from the royal inscriptions of Judean kings.

materials, particularly since many or most of the documents would have been written on papyrus. The discovery of archives consisting of ostraca in major sites like Lachish and Arad demonstrates that archives were a real phenomenon in Jerusalem and Judah. That archives of perishable materials such as papyrus were also a feature of Judean literate activity is suggested by the unearthing in a private house in Jerusalem of fifty or so bullae, dating to the late seventh century, with the impressions of papyrus fibers on their backs. The archive of papyrus documents implied by this discovery was not necessarily "private" in the modern sense of the term; the analysis of ANE (as well as ancient Greek) archival methods, from Sippar-Amnanum in Mesopotamia (seventeenth century BCE), to Kaniš in central Anatolia (ca. 1800 BCE) and Ugarit on the Syrian coast (ca. 1230-1175 BCE) has demonstrated that the line between private and public archival materials and their storage was not clearly demarcated in the ancient world.[1147] The individual who owned this archive in Jerusalem may have been a kind of Judean "Urtenu" (a prominent scribe from Ugarit), storing documents pertaining to state activities as well as documents of a more "private" nature. In other words, the bullae from the "House of Bullae" may constitute evidence of state as well as private archival practice.

Another area of scribal activity in Jerusalem that was likely affected by the infusion of scribes and priests from the north was the writing down of ritual formulations and/or incantations for use in the cult. The presence of early eighth century inscriptions from the Samarian-controlled and/or –influenced site of Kuntillet ʿAjrud suggests that Israel's temple scribes had at least by this date begun fixing in writing incantations as well as theophanic hymns to render more efficacious their invocation of blessings from the deity(ies). The discovery of late seventh/early sixth century silver amuletic texts from Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem, which contain priestly incantations whose terminology is similar to that found in the earlier Kuntillet ʿAjrud graffiti on pithoi, may constitute indirect evidence for this process of transmission. The phenomenon of two different amulets, written by two different hands yet with a similar text, suggests that this particular incantatory blessing had become crystallized at that time as a regular part of ritual tradition. While Jerusalem's priests may not have had a direct hand in writing down and copying such incantations (leaving that to the temple scribes), they would have

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[1147] See Chapter 2's discussion of the distinction between modern and ancient archiving (pp. 34-37).

directed this process by determining the content of this written cultic tradition, and they would have legitimized it by employing these incantations in the official cult.

The similarity of the contents of Kuntillet 'Ajrud's inscriptions with those among the later clusters of graffiti found in the burial chambers of Kh. el-Qôm (late eighth century) and Kh. Beit Lei (seventh-early sixth century) demonstrates that the writing down of incantations, dedications, and hymns to Yahweh (sometimes coupled with his consort, Asherah), may have become so common in the main cultic centers (and primarily in Jerusalem), that members of the Judean elite had come to demand the service of scribes specializing in such formulations. They would have commissioned these scribes to make their requests for blessings more efficacious through fixing them in a more permanent form on their tomb walls.[1148]

The increasing number of administrative and economic inscriptions dating to the late Iron II period and found throughout Judah points to the increasing exploitation of writing by the state's agents. This trend likewise implies an expansion in the numbers of scribes employed by the state, not just in Jerusalem, but in Judah's secondary cities and even in more remote sites like Arad in the Negev. Not all of these scribes could have been trained in Jerusalem, and not all of them would have needed to acquire much more than the rudimentary skills associated with keeping accounts, etc. As the demand grew for scribes, they would have been trained at sites around Judah, and even in remote areas.[1149] These Judean scribes did not receive their training from standardized, formal institutions organized under state auspices. Rather, training proceeded according to a different mechanism: probably along the lines of the ANE scribal training of scribal apprentices in the home-based workshops of their mentors (i.e., more experienced scribes).

In sum, the educational process was increasingly being decentralized over time as demand for writing forced skilled scribes to train others in the rudiments of writing. The possible "wisdom text" on an ostracon from Horvat 'Uza in the Negev, dating to the second half of the seventh century, may be something of an anomaly in terms of the level

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[1148] See below, pp. 343-345, for further discussion of the elite appropriation of writing in Iron II Judah.
[1149] As has been demonstrated previously in this chapter (pp. 312-314), probable evidence for the training of scribes in at least the rudimentary skills of writing has been found at Lachish in the Shephelah, and at Arad, Kadesh-barnea and Horvat 'Uza in the Negev.

of scribal sophistication it represents; conversely, its discovery may signal that the scribal skills being taught in even the more remote locations of Judah were becoming more sophisticated as time passed. Furthermore, the presence of a literary ostracon forecasting God's judgements (including destruction) against some unnamed adversary at a site in a potentially contested border area (Judah versus Edom) may reflect a phenomenon similar to that possibly taking place at Deir 'Alla, i.e. the production of state-sponsored propaganda aimed at another state.[1150]

By the early sixth century, more sophisticated writing skills (such as those needed in the writing of letters) would have been demanded by the military infrastructure established in Judah thanks initially to Hezekiah's preparations for resistance against the Assyrians and the subsequent military alliance with Assyria, and latterly to the state's own security needs as the Levantine region became more destabilized with the waning of Assyrian power in the late seventh century.[1151] By this point, the military infrastructure of Judah depended on a corps of literate professionals (1) to facilitate communication between Judah's capital, garrisons, and outposts by writing letters and dispatches (at the dictation of the military officers whom they served),[1152] and (2) to ensure the regular flow of supplies to troops through the writing of ration lists, etc.[1153]

In the incorporation of writing into the everyday cultic activities of Judah's priests, it appears that a similar process to that which characterized the use of writing for administrative and economic texts was transpiring: increasing attestations of votive

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[1150] For further discussion of this possibility, see the following chapter (Chapter 6).

[1151] For example, Arad Ostracon 24 (late seventh or early sixth centuries) indicates the presence of a threat from the south, and possibly from Edom (Aharoni 1981: 46-49) or from hostile desert tribes who were taking the opportunity created by Assyria's weakness to make raids into the Judean Negev. The Babylonian conquests in southern Palestine, which were associated with the Babylonian struggle with Egypt, severely disrupted the region. The series of campaigns launched by the Babylonians spanned two decades (604-582 BCE) and had the effect of terminating the southern trade network for hundreds of years (until the network was revived by the Nabateans) (Finkelstein 1992: 165-166).

[1152] This hypothesis does not rule out the likelihood that some of these military officers may have been fully capable of writing such missives themselves. It is *not* likely that such officers would have dispensed with the services of scribes, however. Moreover, the letter found at Lachish (*Lach* 3), in which a junior officer asserts his ability to read, may be something of an anomaly, as was suggested previously in this chapter (p. 309). His supposed skills in this regard could be connected to his status as a member of the royal family.

[1153] For example, excavations at Arad yielded Hebrew ostraca containing lists of wheat and barley distributions (Nos. 31 and 25), and a hieratic ostracon containing an inventory of the citadel's storehouse (No. 34). For additional lists and inventories, see Aharoni's discussion of Arad's function as a royal storehouse and the main military fortress of the Negev (1981: 142-148). The archives of Eliashib also provide information about the apportionment of commodities from the storehouses.

inscriptions bearing the word *qdš* and of personal seals of priests (as well as the inscribed ivory pomegranate from Jerusalem, although its authenticity is hotly contested) reveal a steady increase in demand among Judah's cultic professionals for scribes.

One of the major trends in the uses of writing that has been traced in the preceding pages of this chapter is the rapid appropriation of writing by the Judean elite for use in the private domain. Although the written productions for which the Judean elite demanded the services of scribes were not directly connected to official state activities, through the commissioning of such productions the elite nonetheless contributed to the assertion of Judah as an "ethnicizing state." In other words, through the inscriptions commissioned by these elite was projected a notion of social identity that revolved around the employment of a distinct dialect and the belief in the particular efficaciousness of a national deity or set of deities (e.g., Yahweh and Asherah).

How and why did it happen that members of the Judean elite came to appropriate the products of writing for their own private uses? It has already been argued above that the expanding number of elites in Judah is to be correlated with the state's growing need for them to participate in the state hegemonic process (as landowners, administrators, military officers, merchants, priests, etc.). It is further maintained here that the increased exposure of these elites to written products occasioned by this participation led them to appropriate writing for their personal uses. For example, the increasing prevalence of economic inscriptions dating to the late Iron II period at sites throughout Judah, and the find-spots of inscribed weights (often in private residences), suggest that a growing merchant class involved in the southern trade began to employ their own accountants and bookkeepers who had specialized, albeit rudimentary writing skills. It has already been mentioned above that military officers employed the services of scribes in the writing of military dispatches and letters; not all of the letters written for these officers pertained to official, military business, however. Arad No. 16, from a brother to a person not identified by epithet, appears to deal with a money matter. Exposure to writing must have been common enough at some sites in Judah by at least the second half of the seventh century that a Judean farm laborer at the small military fortress of Mesad Hashavyahu hired a scribe to fix his appeal for justice in writing. Perhaps in this way, he

felt sure that his complaint would reach the ears of the fort commander and thereby be settled.

The increase in the users of aniconic seals over the course of the late eighth through early sixth centuries witnesses to the fact that the display of writing had become a sign of social status for Judah's elite. Although some of these seal owners may indeed have possessed literate skills (e.g., the king and some upper level royal officials), most were probably not functionally literate. It really did not matter if they were not able to do much more than recognize their own names on their seals; it was the display of (supposed) literacy that was sufficient to indicate the power and authority of the seal's owner in a society in which the vast majority of people were non-literate.

The fact that all extant monumental inscriptions (those that are more than fragments) derive from the Judean elite suggests the high demand for scribes who could replicate the scribal conventions pertaining to the composition of royal inscriptions, and who could adapt them so as to publicly commemorate the lives and deeds of non-royal individuals, e.g., the commemoration of a major feat of engineering in the Siloam Tunnel Inscription, and the Silwan Tomb Inscriptions, which echo earlier (tenth-ninth century) Phoenician royal inscriptions in identifying and commemorating the dead, addressing prayers to the deity (in this case, Yahweh), and cursing any who deface or in some way interfere with the grave and its inscriptions.

It has been argued that the clusters of graffiti found in burial caves and tombs in Judah and dating to the late eighth and early sixth centuries likewise reveal the efforts of the elite to employ (albeit in a more rudimentary fashion that at Silwan) in their tombs and elsewhere a technology whose display conveyed status and whose use in this largely oral culture possessed the numinous power to alter spaces, rendering them sacred. The cultic content and incantatory character of much of these graffiti, together with the context in which it is found (primarily in burial tombs) suggests the deliberate manipulation of letters and words for apotropaic and ritualistic purposes.[1154] The symbolic and apotropaic character of these graffiti points to the demand for scribes and/or literate stonecutters who could replicate, although with perhaps less skill given the

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[1154] As was emphasized earlier in this chapter, the manipulation of the letters of the alphabet for magical purposes had long been a feature of graffiti in the region; abecedaries continued to be employed for apotropaic purposes in the context of burial tombs in later periods.

brief and fragmentary nature of these inscriptions, the types of written incantations together with the repertoire of images that they saw used in the state cult in Jerusalem (and perhaps in the smaller temples in Judah's secondary cities).

In sum then, the increasing number of inscriptions apparently commissioned by the Judean elite for their own business, commemorative, and ritualistic needs points to a diffusion into the private sector of those writing practices that had developed in the state's bureaucratic and cultic sectors. This development contributed to the growing demand for scribes, a demand which had already been sparked by the needs of the increasingly centralized Judean state. The potential implications that the dramatic growth in the number of scribes had for the production of certain source texts for the Hebrew bible will be explored in the concluding chapter.

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Chapter 6

Concluding Remarks

Throughout the previous pages, two of the three main issues that were raised at the outset of this investigation regarding writing, literacy, and archives in ancient Judah have been addressed, namely: (1) whether the Iron Age served as a likely context for Judean literacy, and (2) what type(s) of communities within Judean society would most likely have been involved in the process of creating and transmitting written texts. This study found that the epigraphic evidence can support the Iron Age, and particularly the latter half of the Iron II period (late eighth through early sixth centuries BCE) as the context for significant Judean literacy, as well as for the presence of institutions such as archives. Through an analysis of the comparative material from the ANE world in general as well as the specifically Levantine material dating to the previous Bronze Age, it was found that it is a subset of the elite, the scribes, who had the most direct hand in the process of written transmission. There is little evidence to suggest that the case of Judah represented an exception. Despite frequent assertions in the scholarship to the contrary, it is very likely that the possession of literate skills *never* became a democratized feature in Judean society.

Now that a detailed investigation of the epigraphic record from the region of Iron II Judah has been undertaken in the immediately preceding chapter, the groundwork has been laid for tackling the final concern of this project: the question of whether or not late Iron Age Judah served as the context for the creation, reproduction, and transmission of a written tradition that later eventuated in portions of the biblical text. In order to set the stage for this, the final discussion of this project, the opening pages of this chapter will summarize the general conclusions that were reached regarding how the technology of writing, in its articulation of the cultural resources of a society, was typically tied to the state hegemonic process in these ancient cultures. This will necessitate a reiteration of

the role played by writing and its practitioners in the articulation of state hegemony in the three civilizations that were dealt with in Chapter 2 – those of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece. Following this summary will be a provisional historical outline tracing the process whereby scribal innovations in the technology of linear alphabetic writing as well as scribal expertise gained in earlier (i.e. LB Age) periods were transmitted during the course of the Iron Age from the Phoenician region to Israel (and probably Aram-Damascus), and from that state to the other emerging states of the southern Levant, including Judah. The final pages of this project will use Judah's epigraphic record as a jumping-off point in its presentation of some possible scenarios for the transmission of written texts in Iron II Judah.

As noted above, the major theme to arise from the examination of comparative material in neighboring ancient cultures is that it is within the context of state formation that cultural resources such as the technology of writing become reined in to further the articulation of state hegemony. It is the bureaucratic elites to whom has been transmitted the embodied practice of writing who play such an important role in producing specific intellectual (i.e. written) products, the meaning of which comes to be fixed in relation to an overarching identity (the state). This process typically results in an expansion of the uses of writing to other social fields that are not so intimately connected with the needs of the state or its potentates.

The study of writing and literacy presented in Chapter 2 demonstrated that in both Egypt and Mesopotamia, the initial uses for writing are best understood within the context of the political, administrative, and ideological development of the unified state. Writing participated in the centralization process (in the form of administrative and economic texts) and was appropriated for royal use (e.g. for ideologically-motivated "monumental" and "commemorative" uses). In classical Greece as well (ca. 480-320 BCE), the rise of the *polis* (city-state) was accompanied (at least in Athens) by a concomitant increase in the number and variety of public and official documents. Nevertheless, the contrast between the social and political environments in which writing developed in Greece versus Egypt and Mesopotamia had a marked impact on what was written down and why it was written down.

In both Egypt and Mesopotamia, the state quickly asserted itself as the dominant and over-arching social and political structure, in relation to which other social fields of activity had to re-position themselves. The technology of writing was no exception; indeed, writing's potential as a controlling device was pursued vigorously in both regions, and the context of its application was long restricted. Throughout the lengthy Old Kingdom period in Egypt, writing's uses remained confined to the specialized techniques associated with the administration of the state, and to the uniquely Egyptian system of display. In Mesopotamia, writing's initial uses were largely limited to the conveying of information centering on administrative activities.

In neither society did writing's use ever feature significantly in the activities of any social stratum other than that of the elite upper class. And in Mesopotamia, it was largely a substratum of the elite class who acquired the requisite literate skills needed to become a scribal professional in service of the state or temple. This relegation of scribal expertise to one segment of the elite class is the most likely template for literate activity in the Levant, as from a very early period the scribal communities of sites such as Ebla in the mid-third millennium, and Emar and Ugarit in the mid-late second millennium, came into being under the influence of Mesopotamian scribes and scribal conventions.

In Egypt, it was not until the Middle Kingdom period that the range of texts and number of inscription owners expanded, and not until the New Kingdom period that the social classes who were able at least to write out their own names and titles broadened as the exposure to written texts increased. During certain eras in Mesopotamia, (most notably the Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian periods), writing practices that had developed in the official bureaucratic sector came to be diffused throughout the private sector as well, and to be adapted to new purposes. In neither of these cases, however, is there much indication that literacy came to extend to a broader segment of society, outside of the class of scribal specialists (which in the case of Egypt, were also typically the upper classes). The extension of writing practices to the private sector in Mesopotamia, and to skilled artisans such as the workmen at Deir el-Medina in Egypt, signifies a growth in the number of scribes as demand for them increased, rather than a growth in general rates of literacy among the populations of Mesopotamia and Egypt.

In ancient Greece, the development of the city-state of Athens in the fifth century BCE is associated with a great variety of documents connected with the workings of its government (including administrative texts, inscriptions, and archives). Nevertheless, the democratic character and ideology of the Athenian *polis* meant that its bureaucracy never sought the amount of control over economic, political and social spheres that Mesopotamia and Egypt attempted to exercise over their larger territories. Moreover, the Athenians primarily used writing to emphasize the authority of the *polis* through the erection of monumental and commemorative inscriptions (such as stone stelae recording decisions or laws), and not as much as an instrument to exert administrative control. While it is true that the establishment of the radical democracy of the 460s brought with it a plethora of documents, these were primarily extensions of the notion that laws and treaties should be published in memorializing form, in order to assert the power of the *polis*. By the fourth century, however, Athens did finally begin to see the potential of writing for maintaining closer control of financial affairs.[1155] Despite the dramatically different development of Athenian government, culture, and society, the range of those who possessed literate skills was similar to that of Egypt and Mesopotamia: in classical Greece (and even later, in Rome), the intellectual resources associated with writing largely remained the provenance of the highly educated and wealthy elite, and their secretaries.

In the southern Levant of the Iron II period, the role played by writing in the articulation of state hegemony took on a unique cast related to the particular circumstances of state formation in that region and during that specific point in time. As has been delineated in Chapters 3 and 4, a peculiar convergence of several historical factors, including the disintegration of imperial states and the old city-state system of the Middle and Late Bronze periods, made possible the emergence of a new phenomenon: the small, increasingly culturally integrated, "ethnicizing" state. By joining local elite and non-elite concepts, the ruling elite of these nascent polities managed to deploy new ways of integrating their disparate identities into a collective entity. With the breakdown of the international system in the late second millennium, the elite use of writing shifted

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[1155] This development is reflected in the publishing of accounts and inventories in order to ensure that the allies of Athens were paying the required tribute, and that the collectors were not embezzling it (see R. Thomas 1994: 33-50).

in the first millennium from legitimizing elite participation in this system to creating new social identities as well as new ethnic categories and boundaries. Written productions (as well as other categories of material culture) facilitated the dissemination of these new ideologies to literate and non-literate like, through the display of various symbols of identity. It can therefore be said that state formation in the southern Levant harnessed both the symbolic and practical aspects of writing to articulate its hegemony as an entity with political boundaries and a discrete identity that distinguished it from other Levantine polities. As was also the case with ancient Greece and the Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures, state formation created the conditions in which writing's uses could be expanded into different spheres, and it increased the incidences of general exposure to written products.

The following historical sketch traces these processes from their original manifestation in the Phoenician region to their realization in Israel and the other "ethnicizing states" of the southern Levant. This sketch leads to a discussion of how Judah, as one of the inheritors of the pan-Canaanite tradition of writing as developed in Phoenicia and Israel, could have served as the context for the production of written traditions that survived the disruptions associated with the Babylonian invasion of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem in the first quarter of the sixth century BCE.

Phoenicia

In LB Canaan, the technology of writing was dominated by a small, elite cast of scribes, who helped their employers (i.e. the rulers of each city-state) legitimize their position in and outside of the region by means of written correspondence, as attested by the letters that passed between these rulers and the Egyptian court at Amarna (ancient Akhetaten). The dissolution of these city-states and the abandonment of the Canaano-Akkadian writing system (as well as of Akkadian and of the cuneiform alphabet writing system of Ugarit to the north) during the LB/Early Iron transition did not, however, results in changes to the social categories of those using writing.[1156]

[1156] Indeed, even the earliest attestations of the West Semitic alphabet (ca. 1850-1700 BCE) are to be connected with elite activity. One of the two Proto-Canaanite inscriptions at Wadi el-Hol, for example, was made by the chief or captain of a military expedition.

As has been demonstrated in Chapter 3, the development of the West Semitic linear alphabet in the Phoenician region arose from a LB/Early Iron context in both Phoenicia and the rest of Canaan in which the attestations of writing continued to be limited to the elite sphere, as attested by the inscriptions in Proto-Canaanite and Old Canaanite that point to the royal, military, and/or cultic use of writing.[1157] The new writing tradition, developed in the Phoenician city-states during the Iron I period and centered on the use of the linear alphabet, did not result in a sudden expansion in the categories of people using writing, despite the greater ease with which this writing system is learnt. Neither did the scribal tradition of these coastal cities emerge from thin air; in the previous LB Age, these trading centers had already developed a scribal tradition, thanks at least in part to their trading contacts with Ugarit. It is very possible that Ugarit's scribes, as the dominant scribal community of the Levantine coastal region, likewise transmitted knowledge of archival methods to their trading partners in the south.

The lamentably small corpus of extant inscriptions from Phoenicia (and primarily the site of Byblos) dating to this Iron I period is nevertheless sufficient to demonstrate that the technology of linear alphabetic writing was used to articulate the hegemony of the ruling elite in these coastal city-states. This writing system was conscripted for use in monumental inscriptions that laid emphasis on the power, piety and building activities of the ruler by dedicating walls or statues to deities, or invoked heavy curses against those who disturbed their coffins.[1158] Through these royal inscriptions, the Byblian rulers legitimized their position as important potentates and as faithful representatives of the deity in the local language and in the local tradition of West Semitic alphabetic writing, rather than in the language and script of the neighboring powers (Egypt and Mesopotamia). For the first time in the Levantine region, therefore, local rulers sought to convey their power and identity in monumental form and in a local language. This touched off a process in the coastal cities as well as later in the emerging states of inland Canaan and the Transjordan in which local dialects of the West Semitic language became

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[1157] Note, for example, the eleventh century arrowheads inscribed with the names of military commanders and even a king, the Lachish Dagger inscribed in Proto-Canaanite (ca. 1725 BCE), and the thirteenth century votive Lachish Ewer Inscription.

[1158] Byblian scribes also used the linear alphabetic writing for cultic inscriptions. Both the media of an inscribed bronze spatula and pottery cone as well as their discovery in the area of the temples suggest a cultic context for writing in late Iron I Byblos.

one of the markers that distinguished them from each other and from the larger players in the Mediterranean region (i.e. Assyria, Egypt) in the following Iron II period.

The epigraphic record from the coastal region, comprised as it is of monumental and cultic inscriptions on stone and on other non-perishable media, very likely does not reflect the entire scope of the writing activities that took place in Phoenicia. The vigorous commercial activities of the Phoenician centers must have necessitated the use of writing for administrative and economic texts (as it probably did in the previous LB Age as well). Indeed, the needs of commerce are a potent force in the development of communication techniques. Presumably, the normal writing medium of the Phoenicians for documenting such activities was papyrus, and papyrus needs especially dry conditions if it is to be preserved for any length of time. Because such conditions did not exist along the humid coast of Phoenicia, not a scrap of papyrus testifying to this use of writing has survived.

But the use of writing for administrative and economic purposes was evidently part of the bundle of concepts related to the technology of linear alphabetic writing that was transmitted to Israel, along with the scribal conventions associated with the articulation of state hegemony through the use of local language and script, and with reference to local deities. This process transpired primarily through elite emulation and competition: as the coastal region gained a more dominant role in the Levant as a trading force and as a political and economic power, its elite culture became one of the blueprints for emerging elites in the Levant, who wanted to tailor these elite concepts to their own societies.

Israel (Samaria)

While it is argued that elite concepts centering on innovations in the use of the linear alphabet (and on innovations in arts and crafts) were transmitted to Israel from Phoenicia, this is not to say that the knowledge of writing was unknown in the region of northern Canaan previous to the emergence of Israel as a state in the late tenth/early ninth centuries. It has been demonstrated on the basis of the limited epigraphic record that writing continued to be employed in the elite sphere in the Cisjordan during the Iron I

period (ca. 1200-900 BCE).[1159] By this period, it is clear that the character of this writing was different – in place of fragments of clay tablets bearing texts clearly borrowed and/or influenced by Mesopotamian scribal tradition were brief graffiti on objects like arrowheads and pottery sherds. While the possibility remains that more lengthy texts were being written down in this script on perishable media such as papyrus, these objects are the sole witness to writing activity in inland Canaan during the Iron I period, and they appear to pertain primarily to elite and royal activity in the military and perhaps cultic spheres.[1160]

On the basis of the Egyptian analogies pertaining to the elite context of most if not all graffiti-writing in Egypt, these items should not be dismissed as the experimental scribblings of nearly illiterate individuals; in all likelihood, they attest to the presence of a small corps of scribes serving the (admittedly limited) needs of the Iron I elites. Furthermore, the partial re-establishment of the LB Age city-state system in the tenth century BCE, primarily in the northern part of Canaan (dubbed "New Canaan" by Finkelstein),[1161] doubtless resulted in the employment and training (at least in rudimentary writing skills) of a small scribal community. With the possible exception of two short inscriptions on ostraca found at Tel Rehov in the Lower Galilee region,[1162] however, there is unfortunately no inscription dating to the tenth century that can be identified positively with the activity of the scribes in these tenth-century city-states.

It was not long after the destruction of these city-states, probably at the hands of the Egyptians during Pharaoh Sheshonq I's campaign in the late tenth century, that the rulers of the northern hill country extended their power into the lowlands to found a large multi-ethnic state. The small scribal community of this new polity would have been very

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[1159] It has even been suggested in Chapter 3, based on the find-spots of several Old Canaanite inscriptions dating to the LB Age (primarily the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries), that the limited scribal community active at those sites that are represented in the Amarna correspondence of the LB Age persisted through the disruptions of the LB/Iron I transition to help foster the new, local script and fledgling scribal tradition centered on the West Semitic linear alphabet.

[1160] Note also the bronze bowl inscribed with the name of its owner that was discovered at Kefar Veradim in Upper Galilee and dated by its excavator to the tenth century. This bowl clearly belongs to an elite context, as it was entombed in a burial cave that appears to have belonged to a noble family of Canaanite-Phoenician origin.

[1161] Finkelstein 2003: 75-83.

[1162] The site of Rehov in the Jordan Valley was one of the major Canaanite city-states during the LB period (see Goren, Finkelstein, and Na'aman 2004: 320), and it has been identified by Finkelstein as one of the revived city-states that comprised "New Canaan" (Finkelstein 2003: 77).

receptive to the transmission of elite concepts related to the linear alphabetic writing technology that had been developed in the coastal cities. That they readily employed this writing system for administrative and economic purposes is attested indirectly by the prominence achieved by Israel in the Levantine region by the early-mid ninth century BCE. It is difficult to imagine that Israel could have effectively managed its resources and administer its conquered territories without the active participation of a scribal community engaged in writing letters and military dispatches, and ensuring that the flow of goods from the peripheral regions to the state's center moved smoothly. A possible reflection of the latter scribal activity is to be found in the eighty-one ostraca from the capital Samaria, which attest to the implementation of a system of taxation, or of some kind of royal supply system. The elite concepts transmitted from Phoenicia would also have included knowledge about archival techniques – the existence of state archives consisting primarily of perishable materials such as papyrus is hinted at by the discovery in Samaria of around fifty bullae bearing papyrus fiber marks on their reverse sides. The extant epigraphic record from Samaria only hints, therefore, at what was doubtless the very active role played by Israel's scribal specialists in the administering of the state. And by engaging in a series of writing practices that were predicated on the existence of Israel as a totality, Israel's scribes in turn helped generate state hegemony.

The pan-Canaanite writing tradition passed down to Israel's scribal community from Phoenicia also gave them the means whereby they could visibly and publicly assert the existence of Israel as a totality. Through the composition of monumental stelae, the new ideologies related to Israel's assertion of statehood over a heterogeneous population under a local dynasty (the Omrides) could be disseminated to literate and non-literate alike. (The archaeological record from ninth-century Israel reveals that this assertion of state hegemony was also accomplished by means of architecture in Israel: e.g., the construction of fortified compounds with palatial quarters at Samaria, Jezreel, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer). One can surmise the creation of such royal monuments in Israel based on the small fragment of an eighth century monumental inscription discovered in Samaria, as well as on the fact that contemporary Syrian and Transjordanian polities produced such texts.

The way in which a local dynasty in Israel made visible and public its nationalistic claims can be guessed at by an examination of the contents of the contemporary Levantine monumental inscriptions that have survived. For example, the contents of the mid-ninth century Mesha Inscription from Moab reveal how new social identities as well as new ethnic categories and boundaries could be articulated through the medium of public display. Through the claims made by Mesha regarding his legitimacy as ruler (and particularly his boasts regarding his patrimony, i.e. his father "ruled over Moab"), it can be seen how the existence on a basic social level of kinship ties, presumably in the form of lineages, underlay the formation in the elite sphere of dynasties and dynastic traditions. Mesha's reference to his patrimony reflected the primary concern of Iron Age Levantine royalty, i.e. sustaining dynastic legitimacy.

The contents of the Mesha Inscription therefore help demonstrate how the development of ethnicity in the southern Levant was aided by the creation of dynastic traditions (such as the "House of Omri") by the Iron Age elites; this stela and the reference to Milkom in the royal inscription from the Amman Citadel likewise demonstrate how these dynasties were closely connected to religious traditions with which the state as a whole came to be identified. In the Mesha Inscription, Mesha is portrayed as selected by his patron deity Kemosh to lay claim to the totality of the people, resources, and land of Moab; in this way, the requirements of the deity legitimize the territorial ambitions of the ruler, and enable him to assert his state's identity as a totality with clearly-defined borders vis-à-vis an enemy state (in this case, Israel).[1163]

Furthermore, the dedication of a high place to Kemosh in Qarhō (probably a citadel in Dibon), which constitutes the *raison d'être* behind the inscription's erection, points to the close association of the state hegemonic project with the establishment of large sanctuaries associated with the national cult, and the likely formation of an attendant cultic personnel engaged in performing the requisite rituals. Along with these priestly elite was a coterie of scribes to serve the needs of the temple and smaller, local

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[1163] As has been demonstrated in Chapter 4, Mesha's assertion of the statehood of Moab in the mid-ninth century BCE is somewhat contradicted by the lack of strong archaeological evidence for state formation in that region until the eighth century BCE. In the Mesha Inscription, therefore, Moab is asserted to exist as a totality, even though no state appears to have existed as yet. But such claims paved the way for the formulation of practices and policies (such as state building programs and tax collection) that presumed the existence of just such an entity (see B. Routledge 2004: 141).

sanctuaries. The activities of such individuals are reflected in the dedicatory inscriptions dating to the Iron II period (ca. 900-550 BCE) and found throughout the southern Levant, from Phoenicia, to Philistia, Israel, the Transjordan, and Judah.

It is the spatial context of some of this cultic writing that suggests another way, besides the setting up of royal stelae, that the public and state-controlled dissemination of these new ideologies centering on a national dynasty and cult may have transpired in Israel (and elsewhere). This way is hinted at by the discovery of the early eighth-century cultic graffiti at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, the wayside station situated on an important trading route in northern Sinai which is nonetheless linked to Israel in the north. Inscribed on large pithoi and on the plastered surfaces of the walls of a small sanctuary within the larger complex of the site are formulaic blessings (and even part of a theophany) written in the names of Yahweh and other deities that may have originally emanated from the ritualistic practices of Israel's priests and cultic functionaries in Samaria. The public display of these graffiti as well as their association with a range of related symbols (i.e. drawings connected with the cult and probably the royal dynasty of Israel) would have ensured that the message(s) would have been conveyed to even the most illiterate onlooker. The more general context of the site, i.e. located on one of the desert trade-routes that was very likely controlled by Israel during this period, likewise suggests that the inscriptions and wall paintings were officially commissioned by that state.

A similar phenomenon may have been taking place at the site of Deir 'Alla, given the context of its early eighth century plaster inscription – displayed prominently on a wall of a small chamber that possessed a clear cultic character – and the location of this site in the central Jordan Valley, which was crisscrossed by trade routes. Sections of the prophetic visions of the seer Balaam, although couched as social critique,[1164] could have functioned as political propaganda aimed at another state. It is not as clear, however, as to which polity would have controlled this site and sponsored the composition and/or reproduction of a text describing the prophetic visions of the seer Balaam. The sanctuary and its literary productions may have operated as a locus for the resistance of one polity, such as Moab or Ammon, against another polity, such as Israel or Aram-Damascus. Or

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[1164] Strophe II (lines 9b-13a), for example, criticize the practices of the school and cult, rebuking pupils for their mischief-making, (male) teachers for their asinity, and (female) cultic personnel for their sexual promiscuity.

perhaps the site fell within Israel's sphere of influence, especially as it is apparent that Israel laid claim to parts of the Jordan Valley during the ninth century.

The two most likely candidates who were at odds appear to have been Moab and Israel. Both are attested in inscriptions some seventy-five to a hundred years earlier as possessing significant levels of political and military might, and as being enemies of each other.[1165] Both – and in particular Israel – were still exercising this power in the eighth century BCE (up until 722/21 BCE in the case of Israel) at the time of Deir 'Alla's existence and the production of the Balaam text.[1166] By this time, Moab's state infrastructure and associated scribal community may have been able to support the production of such a text, just as Israel's could have done. It is intriguing to think of Deir 'Alla as a node of scribal activity associated with Israel or Moab's scribal community, creating state-sponsored propaganda against its long-time rival.

As well as its importance as publicly displayed social critique, the Deir 'Alla plaster inscription reveals two additional facets of Levantine writing activity during the Iron II period. The crafting of this inscription in conformity with the conventions of ancient Canaanite prosody (as exemplified in the Ugaritic poetry) reveals the sophistication of scribal knowledge and activity in the Levant during the Iron II period. The inscription testifies to the scribal talent fostered by the new ethnicizing states of the region, and particularly Israel. In other words, as one of the dominant powers in the southern Levant, Israel was also presumably one of the primary employers of the most erudite scribes.

Moreover, it is not hard to imagine that the scribal community of Israel, whose activities were fostered by the state, may have trained some of the scribes who ended up working for other royal dynasties in Judah and the Transjordan. These scribes (or scribes trained by them) would have been instrumental in formulating the prestige dialect that

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[1165] The black obelisk of Shalmaneser, for example, mentions Israel under Ahab as one of the leaders of a coalition that confronted the Assyrian king at the battle of Qarqar in 853 BCE. The mid-ninth century Mesha Inscription describes a Moabite repossession of lands and cities held by Israel.

[1166] Israel under Pekah was one of the two leaders of an anti-Assyrian coalition of Syro-Palestinian states set up during the years 737-735 BCE, while Tiglath-pileser III was occupied elsewhere in his empire (Pritchard 1969: 282-283). As reported in Sargon II's Prism A, Moab, in conjunction with Judah, Edom and the Philistine city-states, attempted to form a coalition against the Assyrians under Sargon II in 713 BCE (Pritchard 1969: 287). Moab is also frequently named in Assyrian inscriptions between 728 and 652 BCE as a giver of tribute.

characterizes, for example, the language of the royal inscriptions from Moab and Ammon. As an elite, scribal construct, the language of these inscriptions purposefully distinguishes itself in subtle ways from the languages of the royal inscriptions from neighboring regions and provides something of a template for the inscribing of texts from the territory claimed by the monarch. The exportation of scribes and/or scribal knowledge directly from Israel to the Transjordan would also explain why Transjordanian scribes were apparently familiar with Phoenician-Samarian epistolary scribal conventions, as seen in the Phoenician letter found at Saqqara, and in the Kuntillet 'Ajrud graffiti (although the latter appears in a cultic, rather than an epistolary context).

In addition to signaling the relatively high level of scribal sophistication among at least a small percentage of the Levantine scribes, the plaster inscription also attests to a scribal literary tradition centered on the writing down (or composing) of the prophetic oracles of an individual around whom traditions of prophetic sayings had accrued. The recording and perhaps even the collecting of prophetic oracles as a facet of Levantine scribal activity is hinted at in the Amman Citadel Inscription (late ninth or early eighth century), which is written in the style of a prophetic oracle granting the deity Milkom's authorization for the king's building project and assuring the Ammonite king of victory and prosperity. This inscription suggests the involvement of royal scribes in the gathering and recording of oracles (but perhaps only those favorable to the king?). It can be inferred that these scribes would have selected and re-used extracts from these collections of prophetic oracles in the redaction of royal inscriptions. In this example (as at Kuntillet 'Ajrud and perhaps at Deir 'Alla), the religious and cultic use of writing was clearly appropriated for state use, in this case by the ruling elite of Ammon.[1167]

Judah

The discussion above demonstrates that a significant range of scribal knowledge and a wide array of textual types were available to the ruling elite and their scribes in the emerging state of Judah. In the scenario proposed by this study, this scribal tradition was

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[1167] A contemporary royal inscription from the northern Levant that may likewise indicate the collection of prophetic oracles by royal scribes is the early eighth century Zakkur Stela from the Neo-Hittite kingdom of Hamath and Lu'aš in Syria. Written in the Phoenician language, this monumental inscription contains explicit references to oracles spoken by seers and prophets in the name of the deity Baalshamayin (see A. Lemaire 1997: 171-193; cf. M. Nissinen 2000: 264-265).

one which was transmitted to Israel by Phoenicia, developed by Israel's scribal elite in the service of Israel's ruling dynasties, and then passed on to Judah and the Transjordan through trade, territorial expansion, and diplomatic domination. (Aram-Damascus may have also been another agent for the transmission of such concepts from Phoenicia to the Transjordan, via the Neo-Hittite and Aramean states of Syria). It is further argued that Judah's scribal community became the direct recipient of this Phoenician-Samarian writing tradition with the influx of refugees, whose ranks likely included state and priestly scribes, following the Assyrian destruction of Samaria in 722/721 BCE.

This is not to claim that Jerusalem's scribal community had not already been playing an active role in the official day-to-day transactions of the state. The recent discovery of bullae from a rubbish dump in Jerusalem and dating to the late ninth or early eighth century BCE points to the existence of a collection of papyrus documents, presumably to be associated with the royal administration. Moreover, it is quite possible that their services were required in the memorialization of the achievements of Judean kings in the form of monumental inscriptions, in the same way that the services of their colleagues in other regions of the southern Levant were demanded. But with the infusion of scribal expertise from Samaria, Jerusalem's scribes would have been exposed to some of the highest levels of scribal sophistication available in the southern Levant. It is probably no coincidence that from the late eighth century onwards, the range of uses to which the technology of writing could be applied expanded considerably.

The increasing use of writing for bureaucratic and official business throughout Judah also reflects the fact that the state's opportunities for exerting its hegemony in the region expanded as Judah was integrated into Assyria's regional economy. Judah's own economy prospered as its trade activities were enabled and encouraged by Assyrian interest in controlling the access points to the main trade routes. At the same time as Judah's economy thrived thanks to its participation in the southern trade network, its state apparatus became increasingly centralized. These developments entailed a demand for more elites, most notably scribes, who could fill positions in the administration as well as in trade. As the demand grew for scribes to aid in the transaction of state business, so too would have grown the exposure of the other Judean elites to their written products. As a result, writing practices became diffused into the private sector as the elites appropriated

the services of scribes to transact their own business and to commemorate their own lives and achievements (e.g., in the late eighth century Siloam Tunnel Inscription and the Silwan Tomb Inscriptions), just as they saw done with the lives and achievements of the king in royal inscriptions.

These developments only intensified following Sennacherib's campaign against Judah in 701 BCE, as Judah once again became a part of the lucrative southern trade network, and as demand grew for disposable resources which could support its growing military infrastructure as well as its burden of tribute due Assyria. The expanding opportunities in the military and trade paved the way for the emergence of distinct elite identities, at least partially separate from kin and locality, including among their number scribes. The scribal enterprise became increasingly decentralized as the demand for new scribes throughout Judah drew more skilled scribes away from Jerusalem and to Judah's secondary centers and outposts, to train others in the rudiments of writing.

The growing demand among the Judean elite for written products also contributed to the scribes' swelling numbers, and the display of writing on private seals and tombs became a sign of elite status and authority. To display a petition or request for benediction and protection was to ensure that it would be heard, whether by the city's governor (as in the case of the "Reaper's Letter") or the deity (as in the case of the silver amulets from Ketef Hinnom and the burial graffito on the walls of a tomb at Kh. el-Qôm). It is likely that in most cases, however, this display did not reflect any degree of literacy on the part of the individual who commissioned it. The presence of the name and patronymic (and perhaps the official title) of the seal owner, for example, can go no farther than to indicate that elite citizens could read the pattern of their own names, without being able to recognize a single sign in another context.

How might the proliferation of scribes and scribal activity have been connected with the creation, reproduction, and transmission of source texts that would later be integrated into the biblical texts? By instigating a process whereby the compiling of texts such as incantations and prophecies was gradually being decentralized. The gathering together of a variety of incantatory formulae, hymns, and theophanies on the tomb wall of

Kh. Beit Lei in particular (and, to a lesser extant, at Kh. el-Qôm)[1168] suggests that a process of collecting specifically Yahwistic texts had begun to transpire in the ever expanding scribal circles of Judah. The discovery of the Ketef Hinnom plaques in a private tomb, both of which carry similar incantatory blessings addressed to Yahweh, likewise signifies that parts of ritual tradition were being crystallized in written form by the late seventh/early sixth century for the private use of individuals; this fixing in writing of elements of ritual practice likely echoes an ongoing project among Jerusalem's temple scribes. That such a process may have begun earlier in Israel is suggested by the gathering together of incantatory formulae and texts at the northern-controlled site of Kuntillet 'Ajrud. As a feature of Israel's cult, the compiling of such lists may then have been transmitted to the scribal community serving Jerusalem's priests. While the priests of Jerusalem's temple may not have had a direct hand in writing down and copying incantations (leaving that to the temple scribes), they would have directed this process by determining the content of the lists, and they would have legitimized it by reading and performing these incantations in the official cult.

The gathering together of Yahwistic texts on the walls of a tomb at Kh. Beit Lei, perhaps by scribes hired by a member of the Judean elite, therefore likely reflects the activity of more sophisticated scribal practice in Jerusalem whereby hymns, prayers, incantations etc. that had been circulating independently in Judah (and earlier in Israel) as part of a living ritual tradition were being brought together into scrolls. The fact that these efforts may have centered primarily or even exclusively on the collection of texts addressed to Yahweh (and perhaps Asherah?), the patron deity of Jerusalem's royal dynasty, suggests a state-directed initiative. As an initiative designed to establish the primacy of the ruler's patron deity and that deity's cult, this strategy would in turn help unite the region around a single royal dynasty and a single cultic tradition.

Another potential writing practice of Jerusalem's royal and temple scribes that could have been taken up by Judah's growing scribal community as writing practices were decentralized was the reporting and perhaps even collecting of prophecies. The

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[1168] The tomb walls of Kh. el-Qôm do not contain the variety of graffiti that is found at Kh. Beit Lei. As noted previously, the most lengthy graffito consists of a warning against disturbing the tomb, and an incantation calling upon Yahweh and his Asherah to bless the tomb's owner, 'Uriyahu. The warning in this tomb and those found in the tomb at Kh. Beit Lei were apparently meant to protect the integrity of the inscriptions (e.g., Inscription 1 in Kh. Beit Lei reads "Cursed be the one who would erase…").

reporting of prophecies originally delivered orally in the context of letters to the king is a phenomenon attested as early as the Old Babylonian period at Mari (eighteenth century BCE);[1169] by the reign of Esarhaddon (681-669 BCE), Assyrian scribes had begun making collections of oracles for storage and later reference in the royal archives. These archival copies of prophecies were used by the scribes of Esarhaddon in their composition of the royal inscriptions of this king.[1170] Moreover, by being preserved in library copies, these oracles were deliberately made part of the corpus of literature to be passed on to posterity.[1171]

In the Levant, the presence of prophets as a social phenomenon during the Iron II period is demonstrable: for example, an unnamed prophet (*hnb'*) is mentioned in Lachish Letter 3 (ca. 598 BCE); Zakkur, the king of Hamat and Lu'aš, claims to have received assurances of victory against his enemies from the god Baalshamayin through the mediation of seers (*hzyn*) and prophetic "messengers" (*'ddn*) in the stela (ca. 785 BCE) he had erected at Afis in Syria.[1172] The inscription on plaster together with its rubrics from Deir 'Alla demonstrates that scribes copied down a series of visions from a literary text, possibly a "book" (*spr*) of Balaam son of Beor; the composing of visions and attributing them to a specific individual (whether that individual existed or not is another matter) is arguably based on the known practice in the Levant of writing down the oracles of seers and prophets. The scribal practice of recording and combining several prophecies at once for dispatch to the king is also mirrored in the biblical text: Jeremiah 36 presupposes (although does not necessarily document) the writing down of a series of prophecies by the scribe Baruch at the dictation of Jeremiah.[1173]

[1169] For the most updated list of letters from Mari containing prophetic quotations to the king, Zimri-Lim, see J.-G. Heintz 1997: 195-214.

[1170] That Esarhaddon's scribes made use of these collections of prophecies is evident not merely from the fact that the inscriptions of Esarhaddon refer to prophecies, but also because they evidently presuppose knowledge of the prophetic oracles collected in three multicolumn tablets that were stored in Nineveh's royal archives (M. Nissinen 2000: 267).

[1171] *Ibid*, 248.

[1172] Even though the divine words of the oracle supposedly delivered to Zakkur were obviously formulated by a scribe, the Old Aramaic designations for prophets (*hzyn*, *'ddn*) and the "fear not" formula (*'l tzhl*) "presents an oracle that is in every respect parallel to Mesopotamian and biblical prophecy" (M. Nissinen 2000: 265). This suggests that the author of the inscription was familiar with the language and repertoire of the "seers" and "messengers" when he cited this prophecy.

[1173] Jeremiah 36 likely dates to a much later period than the events it purports to describe, however; its date of composition is certainly much later than those of the Deir 'Alla plaster inscription and the Zakkur Stela.

Furthermore, the contents of royal inscriptions from the Levant (the Amman Citadel Inscription, the Zakkur Stela) hint at the collection of oracles favorable to the king by scribes for later use in their royal stelae.[1174] Such a practice – i.e., the re-contextualizing of prophecies to serve as royal propaganda in monumental inscriptions – would very likely have been a feature of royal scribal activity in Jerusalem as well. Moreover, the Judean state may have encouraged the writing down and displaying of oracles and prophecies which had the character of political critiques at more remote locations, in order to serve as propaganda, perhaps in its assertion of hegemony vis-à-vis another state (e.g., against Edom in the context of Judah's Negev fortresses and outposts). Such state-directed scribal activity could account for the literary ostracon (second half of the seventh century BCE) from the Negevite site of Horvat 'Uza, which predicts God's judgments and imminent destruction against some unnamed adversary. The presence of a state-directed production of texts at a site in a potentially contested border area may reflect a phenomenon similar to that of Deir 'Alla. At this site in the central Jordan Valley, a region which likely switched hands several times over the course of the Iron II period, a small scribal community produced (?), copied and set up for public display a text the first part of which has as its main theme an "oracle of doom." As has been argued above, this small site may have played an important role in the formulation of state-sponsored propaganda aimed at another state.

Could a scenario likewise be proposed for the formulation of state-sponsored historical written traditions: ones that were created to support the state hegemonic project, and which would have emerged within the context of Jerusalem's scribal community? In view here is the historiographic tradition pertaining to the account of the monarchies of Israel and Judah, as ultimately preserved in the biblical books of Samuel through 2 Kings. It should be made clear that what this project is not proposing is the composition of the kind of "expansive portrayal of the past"[1175] that integrates a variety of forms in order to present in a narrative the entire foundation of Israelite history, such as is found in the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH: Deuteronomy through 2 Kings). The

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[1174] Even if the oracles set down in these royal inscriptions are completely scribal productions, their inclusion at the very least reflects the known practice of writing down oracles at a prophet's dictation.
[1175] This phrase was coined by J. Van Seters (1997) in his description of the Deuteronomistic History (see p. 357).

DtrH is a complex genre that has no equivalent in the extant ANE corpus from the period in question (Iron Age), and represents the work of a much later author. Nevertheless, many of the archaeologists and scholars writing on the connection between Judah's epigraphic record and its development as a state continue to insist on the late pre-exilic period as the context for the composition of such a work.[1176]

There is evidence from the ANE world, however, for the existence of several historical and chronological genres that potentially could have served as source texts for later works of broader historiographic scope, including the royal inscription, king list, and chronicle. The extant corpus of inscriptions from Iron II Judah, even when taken together with contemporary inscriptions in the rest of the southern Levant, can only support the presence of one: the royal inscription. Based on the Moabite, Ammonite, and Aramean analogies, it has been argued that in Judah also the great achievements of the ruler would have been monumentalized in such a fashion. If such inscriptions were not composed when Jerusalem was the center of a small highlands polity during the earlier Iron II period (late tenth to ca. 800 BCE), then they were almost certainly written and erected later in the Iron II, when Jerusalem had become the capital of a thriving and increasingly centralized state. Such inscriptions would have provided later royal scribes with accounts of military campaigns and building activity.

The other two historical genres whose presence is attested in the ANE are the king list and the chronicle. The king list typically supplied the length of reign, filiation, and perhaps short notices of changes in dynastic succession and usurpation of power through assassinations, while the chronicle portrayed political events according to a precise chronology.[1177] A case could be made that scribes in both Israel and Judah may have compiled king lists, as such texts were well known in both Mesopotamia and Egypt during the Bronze and Iron Ages.[1178] A king list in alphabetic script from Ugarit (KTU

[1176] See, for example, D. Carr 2005: 134-142, W. Schniedewind 2004: 91-117; and I. Finkelstein and N. Silberman 2006: 259-285.

[1177] For the definition of these genres, see Van Seters 1997: 292-302.

[1178] The Sumerian King List is a literary work which presents both legendary ancestors and historical rulers of southern Mesopotamia. This list, which is preserved in a number of copies dating to the Old Babylonian period (ca. 1800-1600 BCE), traces a series of reigns from the first establishment of kingship in the city of Eridu to the first dynasty of Isin, and ends about 1800 BCE (see T. Jacobsen 1939 for a major study of this list; cf. Van Seters 1997: 70-72 for his study of this list vis-à-vis the biblical traditions preserved in the DtrH). The latest version of the Assyrian King List presents a list of the kings of Assyria, from their earliest ancestors all the way down to the reign of Shalmaneser V (726-722 BCE). The earliest version of

1.113) represents a Levantine example; despite its lacunae, there appear to be entries for about thirty names of kings whose reigns date from ca. 1850 to 1180 BCE.[1179] The primary function of this list was probably cultic, as it does not provide any chronological data or filiation. Nevertheless, this list may set something of a Levantine precedent for the strategy of legitimizing the reigning dynasty through the use of the state-sponsored cult. This is accomplished through a process of associating the dynastic god with each of the king's ancestors and then with him.[1180] The association of the dynastic god Yahweh with the kings of Judah, beginning with the founder of the "United Monarchy" (David), is a strategy that is employed very effectively in the post-Iron Age work of the Deuteronomist (Dtr); in his composition of the DtrH, the Dtr may have had access to a king list similar to that found at Ugarit, i.e. a state-sponsored list, perhaps set up in monumental form, and commissioned by one of the later (late Iron II) Judean kings.

The best argument that can be made for the composing of a more complex historical genre, such as a chronicle, is primarily circumstantial; i.e. that Judah's long domination by Israel, when combined with the need to integrate a large number of refugees, including elites, from Israel might have provided the impetus for a more ambitious scribal project – one which sourced king lists from both states, supplemented with records from monumental inscriptions and collections of oracles, to create a synchronized chronicle of the important political events in both Israel and Judah, with precise dates in strict chronological sequence from one monarch to another. The scribe(s) may also have provided this chronicle with a mythical prologue asserting a common

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this text probably dates to a period prior to, or in the early part of, the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243-1207 BCE) (see W.G. Lambert 1976: 85-94; cf. Van Seters 1997: 72-76). The Turin Canon of Kings in its present form is a king list on papyrus dating to the time of Rameses II, around the thirteenth century BCE. It begins with the names of gods and demigods and includes the names of more than three hundred kings of Egypt down to the end of the Second Intermediate Period, ca. the mid-sixteenth century BCE (see A. Gardiner 1959; cf. Van Seters 1997: 135).

[1179] M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín 1976: 119, text 1.113, verso. This king list is often interpreted as indicating the veneration of the ancestral kings of Ugarit (Van Seters 1997: 201), but see n. 1180 below.

[1180] B. Schmidt 1994: 67-71. Each of the kings in the list is introduced with the designation "god" (*ilu*). Schmidt proposes that this *ilu* element should be interpreted as a noun in construct rather than as a determinative. This would entail a translation of each relevant line as "the god of so-and-so" rather than "divine so-and-so."

history in the distant past – one which consisted of a gold age of unity, a "United Monarchy," based not in Samaria, but in Jerusalem.[1181]

Given that the primacy of Jerusalem as the center of the Judean state had not always been so secure, and given the influx of refugees from a state which had long dominated Judah, culturally as well as politically, the assertion of Jerusalem's position as the center of the Judean state, and of the legitimacy of its ruling dynasty, may have been seen as critical. The creation of this written tradition would have had the effect of strengthening Jerusalem's primacy, uniting the region around a single royal dynasty and a single cultic tradition. Admittedly, such a scribal creation would have been somewhat of an anomaly in the ANE world during the Iron Age. The closest contemporary analogy to such a chronographic work would have been the Assyrian Synchronistic History, but this work does not provide a continuous history of the Assyrian and Babylonian regions, nor does it synchronize the chronologies.[1182]

Moreover, the composition of both the king list and chronicle genres in Iron II Jerusalem is predicated on the hypothesis that Judah's scribes had developed a sense of scribal tradition in their use of archival records, a development about which our database of epigraphic inscriptions from Judah proper is currently mum.[1183] The data from immediately adjacent regions is suggestive on that score, however. Scribal techniques associated with the art of compilation are clearly manifested in the plaster inscription of

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[1181] A similar argument has been made recently by Finkelstein and Silberman (2006: 259-285), although they believe that this work was an early version of the biblical narrative concerning the early days of the Davidic dynasty and the establishment of the United Monarchy of Israel, as found in 1 Samuel through 1 Kings 2.

[1182] Van Seters 1997: 295. The Synchronistic History is similar to the books of Kings in its scope (going back to at least the fifteenth century BCE) and in its synchronization of the reigns of certain Assyrian kings with their Babylonian counterparts. The eighth-century author also appears to have made use of inscriptions on monuments to compose his history. Conversely, this work does not resemble the books of Kings in that it focuses primarily on border disputes, warfare, and treaties (between Assyria and Babylonia). The closest extra-biblical analogy to the books of Kings is the Babylonian Chronicle Series, but this series of tablets were produced at the earliest during the Persian period. They may have been copied from older (Neo-Babylonian) documents, which were compiled from the official annals of Babylonian kings, and from the Astronomical Diaries. Van Seters argues that "the recording of important political events with precise dates in strict chronological sequence from one monarch to another seems to have been a special development of the Neo-Babylonian kings, beginning with the dynastic founder, Nabu-nasir, in 747 BCE" (p. 294).

[1183] As has been demonstrated earlier in this project (Chapter 2: 34-37), archives in the ancient world were comprised of records of the day-to-day business and legal transactions of the state or individual, and were only meant to be kept as long as the state/individual needed them. The fact than an institution or individual collected documents into archives did not necessarily imply that they were to be kept and copied indefinitely for historiographic reasons, i.e. for the benefit of posterity.

Deir 'Alla, which consists of a heading (line 1; written in red ink) and a narrative in third person (lines 2-5), followed by a series of visions (lines 5ff.). This inscription, possibly copied from a "book" (*spr*) of Balaam, signifies that a scribal literary tradition pertaining to Balaam and his visions had emerged in the Levant and was very likely known to the royal scribes of Israel. As contended previously, scribal knowledge centering on the art of compilation would very likely have been part of the parcel of scribal expertise passed down to Judah's scribes by Israel's scribal community. Furthermore, it has been noted already above that the Amman Citadel Inscription from neighboring Amman, (and, further afield, the Zakkur Stela from Syria), at the very least demonstrate the known practice of recording prophecies, and further may reflect a process in which oracles favorable to the king were gathered together for later insertion into the reporting of the king's great deeds on royal inscriptions. As in the Neo-Assyrian case, the preservation of collections of oracles so as to ensure they are available for later consultation and/or use would signify the existence not only of archives, but of scribal tradition (the library) in Jerusalem.

At the very least, therefore, the epigraphic record points to the probability that royal inscriptions providing information about military campaigns and/or building activity, as well as lists and collections of texts (of incantations and possibly prophetic oracles), represented the main corpus of written tradition to emerge in Judah during the Iron II period and to inform the composition of more complex literary texts such as are found in the HB. Moreover, as has been argued above, there are grounds for supposing that Judah's royal scribes may have become capable of combining different sources (such as oracles from archival copies of collected prophecies, the information gleaned from monumental inscriptions and king lists, and prior literary works in the scribal tradition) into one historical account, which would most likely have been a chronicle.

The process whereby older documents could acquire new meanings in later periods is represented in the biblical text of 2 Kings 23:2-3, with the supposed re-discovery of the book of the law during the reign of King Josiah (late seventh century BCE). Despite the exilic or even post-exilic date of the narrative in which this episode occurs, it functions as a literary trope that underlies a potential reality: namely, that collections of incantatory and prophetic texts as well as historical accounts (primarily in

the form of monumental inscriptions and quite possibly king lists and chronicles) were made in Judah by the late Iron II period, and that the scribal activity associated with these written traditions paved the way for the composition of cultic, prophetic and historiographic texts in Judah (and perhaps in Babylon) during later exilic and post-exilic periods, when these pre-exilic texts had accrued additional meanings and poignancy in light of the cataclysmic events that befell Judah in the sixth century BCE.

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