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The Queens' Story.

Bathsheba, Maacah, Athaliah and the 'Historia of Early Kings'[*]

David war der Gründer des judäischen Königtums in Jerusalem. Das "Haus Davids", die regierende Dynastie (und anfänglich zugleich der ganze "Staat") vergewisserte sich im Fort- und Neu-Erzählen seiner Geschichte der eigenen Identität unter wechselnden aussen- und innenpolitischen Konstellationen. Die kontrollierende Instanz der frühen Überlieferung im Schoss der Königsfamilie scheint die Königinmutter gewesen zu sein. 2 Samuel 11f; 1 Könige 1f sind deutlich aus der Perspektive (Nathans und) Bathshebas erzählt und von deren "Autorität" abhängig. 2 Samuel 13-20; 1 Könige 11* und 12 verraten die Perspektive der Absalom-Tochter Maacha, der Gattin Rehabeams. Die Verbindung zwischen David und Saul hat erst die Omridin Atalja in der Mitte des 9. Jahrhunderts vC hergestellt.

Readers of this journal might find the credit overdue which Baruch Halpern finally pays to Bathsheba for shaping the image of David for all generations to come: "Solomon's accession was Bathsheba's revenge for her grandfather and father and for Absalom. In the apology of [the book of] Samuel, it is Bathsheba's voice that we hear, though the hand be the hand of Solomon"[1] – Bathsheba's voice and, as this author proposes to modify Halpern's approach, the voices of two other Judaean queens. Bathsheba and her son won the power struggle before, during and after David's death. David's sons, the royal Judaean princes, were killed. It stands to reason that the

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[1] B. Halpern, David's Secret Demons. Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) 406. The present author, though working from a different set of methodological premises, basically agrees with the results of Halpern's research. The book is compulsory reading for every future student of David's biography and the early history of the Kingdom of Judah. Its contents are presupposed in this article, and not footnoted in every case (if the gentle reader misses a reference, it can probably be found there). What Halpern neglects is the structural level of history vis-à-vis the level of events; this author's bias favors structures over events (cf. E.A. Knauf, Who Destroyed Megiddo VIA? Biblische Notizen 103 (2000) 30-35; Jerusalem in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Periods – A Proposal: Tel Aviv 27 (2000) 75-90; Saul, David and the Philistines: from Geography to History: Biblische Notizen 109 (2001), 15-18; notably the maps). The basic disagreement remaining centers on

Bathsheba – Nathan – Solomon clique did not shed many tears on Absalom's demise. Among David's offspring, only daughters survived, like Maacah bat Absalom, who was to espouse Rehoboam ben Solomon and thus would give birth to Abiah ben David. "It would be intriguing indeed to have Maacah's reflections on the events of her lifetime"[2]. In the opinion of the present author, we do have them, together with the reflections of a third Judaean queen, Athaliah, on David, his rise to power, and the consequences thereof.

1. Points of Departure

This is an essay in historical reading. Like any other reading, it is a creative act of the reader in response to the written. The reading presupposes the reader's encyclopedic knowledge (or lack thereof) of the real world elements referred to by the narrative. Insofar as the present author is a historian of Ancient Israel, his (in this case) reading is an informed one; it is not authoritative insofar as other readings, making use of the same set of encyclopedic data, might well lead to different perceptions. The intention is not to reveal the "original"– or "true" meaning of the text to a public of laypersons, but rather to enhance the text's critical (versus affirmative) potential by separating it from its canonical or traditional contexts (including the scholastic traditions of national and/or confessional exegetical "schools" of the 20th century CE) and re-contextualizing it within the framework of its time to the degree of this framework's present perception. It is hoped that a presentation of the author's historical presuppositions helps to follow the proposed reading of the text.

1.1. From the "Historia of Early Kings" to Samuel-Kings

The bulk of 1 Samuel 1 - 1 Kings 16, if not 2 Kings 10, is not "historiography" in any sense of Ancient Near Eastern literary standards. It is "historical narrative", in the course of its transmission enriched with annalistic materials drawn from other sources. As will be elucidated in detail in due course, there never was a "David story" – the "origin myth of the Beth-David" was, from its very beginning, a story about David and his successor(s). The present author agrees with Nadav Na'aman's

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the reconstruction of Solomon's reign, and on the interpretation of 10th and early 9th century BCE archaeology.

[2] Halpern, Demons, 387.

proposal that there is a "History of Early Kings" at the core of Samuel-Kings[3]; it is, however, suggested to label this work "Historia" rather than "History" in order to preempt the dichotomy of "story" and "history" – the text in question partakes of both to certain degrees and in varying aspects.

The final redaction of the "Historia" is to be dated between the Assyrian siege of Lachish 701 BCE[4] and the reign of Josiah; so it represents another major work from the reign of Manasseh[5]. The origin myth of the Beth-David was frozen to literature shortly after the tribal state, based on the lineages' allegiance to the ruling house, had become the centralized state of Judah[6]. With the incorporation of the Israelite territory of Benjamin (presumably under Josiah), which became Judah's economic center after 586, if not already after 597[7], the origin myth of the Beth-David could no longer integrate the whole population of the late Judaean state and of the province of Yehud and was replaced by the Exodus-Joshua narrative as the "origin myth" of Judaean "All Israel", projecting and paving the way for the canonization of the Torah in 398 BCE[8]. This development is indicative of a strong anti-Davidic sentiment among the

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[3] N. Na'aman, Sources and Composition of the History of David: V. Fritz / P.R. Davies (eds.), The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 228; Sheffield 1996) 170-186; id., The Contribution of Royal Inscriptions for a Re-Evaluation of the Book of Kings as Historical Source: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 82 (1999) 3-17.

[4] See *infra*, § 3.2, the discussion of 2 Samuel 20.

[5] For a Manassite "first edition" of Isaiah, cf. E. A. Knauf, Vom Prophetinnenwort zum Prophetenbuch: Jesaja 8,3f im Kontext von Jesaja 6,1-8,16: lectio difficilior 2/2000.

[6] The change in nomenclature from 'Beth David' (attested in the Tel Dan inscription, second half of the 9th century; 2 Samuel 3,1; Isaiah 7,2) to 'Judah', first attested in a text of Tiglatpileser III dated to 728/7 and referring to 734 BCE, reflects the evolution from tribal state to territorial state. The same is evidenced by the Rank-Size-Index of Judaean cities: Hezekiah's Jerusalem was still, in all probability, smaller than Lachish, whereas the Jerusalem of the times of Manasseh had no rival within the borders of the kingdom; cf. also B. Halpern, Jerusalem and the Lineages in the Seventh Century BCE:
Kinship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability: B. Halpern / Deborah W. Hobson (eds.), Law and ideology in monarchic Israel (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 124; Sheffield 1991) 11-107. Comparatively, in the Assyrian sources "Beth Omri" is upgraded to "Israel" when it successfully withstood Shalmanasser III at Qarqar, then downgraded again to "Beth Omri " after Jehu's *putsch*, and finally to "Samaria" as a Damascene vassal (comparable to "Efraim" in Isaiah 7,2-9). Beth = "House, Family, Dynasty", as in "House (of) Habsburg", which never was a state, but possessed (for a while) a number of these (like the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Grand-Duchy of Tuscany).

[7] Cf. the statistics in C.E. Carter, The emergence of Yehud in the Persian period (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 294; Sheffield 1999); for the significance of 597, cf. C.R. Seitz, Theology in conflict. Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 176; Berlin / New York 1989); E.A. Knauf, Psalm xl und Psalm cviii: Vetus Testamentum 50 (2000) 55-65.

[8] Y. Hoffman, A North Israelite typological myth and a Judaean historical tradition: the exodus in Hosea and Amos: Vetus Testamentum 39 (1989) 169-182; K. Schmid, Erzväter und Exodus. Untersuchungen zur doppelten Begründung der Ursprünge Israels innerhalb der Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1999); R.G. Kratz, Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments (Grundwissen der Bibelkritik; Göttingen 2000) 227ff.

previously Israelite population as late as the 7th and 6th centuries[9]. In the 6th through 4th centuries, the "Historia of Early Kings" was devoid of national significance. It was preserved by deuteronomistic circles (hoping for a "restoration" of Judaean sovereignty – disregarding that such a thing had never existed before[10], and was not to come to fruition until 1948 CE). These added their selection and interpretation of Israelite and Judaean history until the downfall of the two states, *midrash*[11] and, notably, prophetic *haggadah*[12], thereby shaping Samuel-Kings into an introduction to the Latter Prophets. With the re-establishment of national independence[13] at the end of the 2nd century BCE, the deuteronomistic dream had come true, at least for some of its adherents, and Samuel-Kings became, together with the rest of the Prophets, part of the biblical canon (not for Saducees and Samuelaritans, though). By this time, however, the perception of David was already redirected by his presentation in Chronicles, more or less concomitant with the emergence of "David the Prophet" as inspired singer of Psalms. The David of Scripture is not the historical David (as far as the latter can be discerned) nor the David of the "Historia of Early Kings"[14]. Just to point out one blatant difference: the David of Chronicles acts within the texture of an all-male entourage; in the "Historia of Early Kings", the women's contribution to the development of the plot is not at all marginal. The fact has been observed before[15], but

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[9] A pro-Saulide attitude is evidenced by 1 Samuel 14,47f, a "historiographic" gloss not antedating the 6th century. For a Judaean, anti-Jerusalemite David tradition, vigorous still around 700 BCE, cf. Micah 5,1.

[10] David and Solomon (in his earlier years) were Philistine (Gittite) vassals, the Israelite kings from Jeroboam I through Joram lived, together with Phoenicia and Aram-Damascus, under the benevolent tutelage of the XXII dynasty of Egypt, from Jehu through Joash, Aram-Damascus claimed suzerainty of Israel. Unfortunately, there was the precedent of the tributes paid to Shalmanassar III and Adadnarari III preceding the reign of Jeroboam II, the only period in which ancient Israel probably enjoyed something like true independence, ending in 738 when Tiglatpileser III reminded central and southern Syria who its real master was, and of old (empires have an elephant's memory: once Assyrian, forever Assyrian). Judah's emancipation from Israelite vasality was achieved by submitting to Assyria – *servitudo Regis magni summa libertas.*

[11] Like 1 Samuel 15 (on its midrashic character, cf. H. Donner, Die Verwerfung des Königs Saul: Sitzungsberichte der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft an der Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe Universität Frankfurt a. M. 19,5 (1983) 229-260, 241-250 = id., Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 224 (1994) 145-154); 2 Kings 3,6-27 (midrash on 3,4f)

[12] Most notably, the figures of, and stories about Samuel, Eliah and Elijah.

[13] Or so it seemed by the time; when Rome came to the Near East in 64/63 BCE, it claimed the Hasmonean kingdom as part of the Seleucid heritage.

[14] Astutely already observed by J. Wellhausen, Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels (Berlin ²1883) vii: "Die kirchliche Wissenschaft scheint im Alten Testament die Aufgabe zu haben, funzig Jahre lang eine neue Entwicklung zu widerlegen, darnach aber einen mehr oder weniger geistreichen Gesichtspunkt aufzufinden, unter welchem dieselbe ins Credo aufgenommen werden kann ... Gegen die Polemik, die vom Boden der kirchlichen Praxis aus gegen mich geführt wird, habe ich an sich nichts einzuwenden ... aber der kirchliche Standpunkt ist nicht der historische."

[15] Cf. already Ina Willi-Plein, Frauen um David: Beobachtungen zur Davidshausgeschichte: M. Weippert / S. Timm (eds.), Meilenstein. Festgabe für Herbert Donner zum 16. Februar 1995 (Ägypten

as far as the present author is concerned, has not yet been explained by assuming that women played a major role in the story's telling.

1.2. Between the Written and the Oral: the problem of textual fluidity

It is suggested that the "Historia" was a "living text" until its literary fixation in the 7th century. From that point onwards, it was in the hands of scribes, the scholars of the day, who enlarged it and elaborated on it, but did not change its basic texture. For the transmission of the text from the 7th century down to its canonical forms reached in the $3^{rd}/2^{nd}$ centuries (the Hebrew and the Greek texts represent two different "final" editions), the growth of the text might be tentatively reconstructed on the basis of redactional criticism[16]. Before its scholastic canonization, the text was the property of the royal family, the "Beth-David" in the stricter sense of the term, here regarded as a narrative community (*erzählgemeinschaft*) with the fluidity of the narrative necessary to adopt it to changing political and family situations. The early Beth-David was not a group of scribes pondering over received antiquarian traditions, striving to preserve them without losing a word, or adding several words here and a sentence there in order to make sense of the past. The court community was the master of their tale, not (and unlike later scribes) its slaves. The foundation myth of the dynasty had to be

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und Altes Testament 30; Wiesbaden 1995) 349-361; ead., Michal und die Anfänge des Königtums in Israel: J. A. Emerton (ed.), Congress volume. Cambridge 1995 (Vetus Testamentum, Supplements 66; Leiden 1997); Ilse Müllner, Gewalt im Hause Davids. Die Erzählungen von Tamar und Amnon (2 Samuel 13,1-22) (Herders biblische Studien 13; Freiburg im Breisgau u.a. 1997); ead., Die Samuelbücher. Frauen im Zentrum der Geschichte Israels: Luise Schottroff / Marie-Theres Wacker (eds.), Kompendium Feministische Bibelauslegung (Gütersloh 1998) 114 – 129; M.C. Astour in D.I. Owen / G.D. Young, An Interview with Michael Astour: G.D. Young / M.W. Chavalas / R.E. Averbeck, Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons. Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour on His 89th Birthday (Bethesda, Maryland 1997) 1-36, 25f.

[16] This presupposition implies a research strategy for the development of the story prior to 700 BCE different from a reading strategy for its development after Hezekiah. From ca. 700 BCE onwards, redactional criticism might try, with some hope for success, to identify various deuteronomistic layers in Samuel-Kings as well as traces of its incorporation into the Exodus-Kings-Story and finally, into the collection of the Former Prophets. The redactional activity from 700 to ca. 300 BCE is not regarded here (except for 2 Samuel 20, cf. § 3.2). Within the present narratological approach, the search for 'sources' like an 'ascension history', a 'succession narrative', an 'A' or 'B' source of Samuel becomes increasingly meaningless and methodologically suspicious. Expected are various layers and additions to the narrative tradition. There surely were other stories about David and the Early Kings told outside the Jerusalem court, and the latter might have fed, at various occasions, into the former (cf. § 4.2). As essential as it was for the court of Beth-David to keep their collective image of the Dynasty's founding hero up-to-date, as essential it must have been to relate him to the powers that had come into being by the time of the various retellings. To identify material possibly deriving from the 'History of Early Kings' within Samuel-Kings, a minimal amount of source criticism and form criticism is called for. Texts to be attributed to it should be characterized by novelistic traits, as opposed to annalistic material that found its way into Samuel-Kings, and as opposed to later midrashic *haggadah*. – All texts in 1 Samuel 9 – 2 Kings 10 attributed by the present author, to the period prior to 700 BCE, will be addressed (if briefly most of the time) in the course of this contribution.

flexible in order to react to changing constellations of power, both within and outside Judah. In addition to textual growth, one must also admit the possibility of censorship, deleting details from the "Historia" which later generations found intolerable. Or why are the glorious days of the Omride dynasty known by now from archaeology and from epigraphy[17], but not at all from the Bible?

The text of the "Historia", then, has to be treated as "oral literature" without denying that it, or parts of it, could have been preserved in writing from as early as the 9th century onwards. Although it is evident that the courts of David and Solomon did not keep annals[18], the heroic songs collected in the "Book of the Valiant" might well be attributed to them[19], and both kings must at least have employed some accountants. It is safe to assume that scribes trained in literary composition were in Athalia's entourage when she brought the advanced civilization of Phoenicia and (northern) Israel to the Judaean south[20]. There is positive proof that literary compositions from the 7th and 6th centuries were at the disposal of the biblical editors in the 5th century[21]. Recently Luca Giuliani was able to trace the rise of a literate culture among

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[17] I. Finkelstein / N.A. Silberman, The Bible unearthed. Archaeology's new vision of ancient Israel and the origin of its sacred texts (London 2001); I. Finkelstein, State formation in Israel and Judah: A contrast in context, a contrast in trajectory: Near Eastern Archaeology 62/1 (1999) 35-52; id., Omride architecture: Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina Vereins 116/2 (2000) 114-138.

[18] When did the production of annals in Judah commence? Clearly not under David or Solomon, cf. E.A. Knauf, Die Umwelt des Alten Testaments (Neuer Stuttgarter Kommentar Altes Testament 29; Stuttgart 1994) 22f; 122. Likely candidates are Rehoboam or Athaliah. As it was the «Omride input» which conferred to Judah the first appurtenances of statehood (palaces and fortress towns as traceable in the archaeological record; cf. I. Finkelstein, Levant 32 (2001) 105-115), it might have been Athaliah who introduced to Jerusalem the first trained scribes trained in the sciences and arts (they might have had some accountants at Jerusalem previously).

[19] Joshua 10,12f; 2 Samuel 1,17-27; 1 Kings 8,12f (Lxx*). The inclusion of David's lament on (Saul and) Jonathan in this collection furnishes an argument that it was committed into writing under Athaliah, again (cf. *infra* n. 77). "To teach the bow" (1,18) means that the lines of the song were used to memorize the individual motions of the bow-drill. Bowmen are conspicuously absent in the wars of David and the early kings (their enemies have them: 2 Samuel 31,3), the possession of a bow is restricted to a royal prince (1 Samuel 18,4; 2 Samuel 1,18.22). The introduction of chariotry (at the latest in the first half of the 9th century) necessitated archery training. A useful (i.e. composite) bow remained a luxury item.

[20] For the facts on the ground, cf. I. Finkelstein, The Rise of Jerusalem and Judah: the Missing Link: Levant 32 (2001) 105-115. This might be the reason why the Israelite and Judaean scribal traditions did not separate during the 9th and 8th centuries, as observed by J. Renz, Schrift und Schreibertradition. Eine paläographische Studie zum kulturgeschichtlichen Verhältnis von israelitischem Nordreich und Südreich (Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina Vereins 23; Wiesbaden 1997). This observation cannot deny the dialectal and cultural differences which characterize the Israelite and Judaean cultures. It is possible that the annalistic material in 1 Kings 1-15, as much of it as there is, derives from Israelite annals which may have commenced under Jeroboam I and were brought to Jerusalem by Athalia.

[21] Notably, the preservation of Judaean orthographic features where these deviate from Biblical Hebrew orthography, as in the cases of the 3rd person m. sg. suffixes (h and w instead of w and wy).

the Greeks on the basis of iconography[22]. Applying his criteria to the Jewish evidence, one has to state that Israelite and Judaean iconography attests to a "non-literary" society well into the 6th century. After sort of an iconographic gap in the Persian, Hellenistic and Early Roman period, the first "pictures for readers of the Bible" known to this author are the frescos of the synagogue at Dura Europos, from the first half of the 3rd century CE. This observation squares well with what we presently know about the production, distribution and reception of biblical literature, and allows to treat the whole of pre-exilic Israelite and Judaean literary production as "oral", regardless of its mode of preservation and transmission.

In the case of "oral" literature, it is a moot quest to look for authors. The collective "author" of the "Historia" is the Beth-David. Still a story of this kind needs authorities lending it credibility for contemporaries as well as for their descendants, should it ever find acceptance other than by the brute force of a royal decree upheld by means of a thought police. Because a king remains crown prince (if even that[23]) as long as his father is alive, there is only one member of the royal family left to have seen the days of the last reign, or most of it, with her own eyes: the Queen Mother. It is claimed in this contribution that the main authorities behind the stories about Saul, David, Solomon, Rehoboam (and even some later kings) are the three queen mothers Bathsheba, Maacah and Athaliah.

1.3. Content criticism

The attempt to stratify – and to date – traditions, i.e. textual contents, could appear as an attempt to resuscitate *traditionsgeschichte* or *formgeschichte* of deservedly bad reputation, having made up vast amounts of "tradition" (all very ancient, and known to every Israelite from the day they departed from Egypt) instead of analyzing the making of tradition, which is the purpose of this author. Content criticism is a necessary supplement to redactional criticism because the latter only works well for the very last strata of a text which was compiled over centuries[24]. As a rule of thumb,

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[22] Luca Giuliani, Bilder für Hörer und Bilder für Leser. F. Zimmer (ed.), Zur Veränderung der narrativen Ikonographie in klassischer Zeit: Die griechische Klassik – Idee oder Wirklichkeit (Ausstellungskatalog Berlin-Bonn 2002, Berlin / Mainz 2002) 338-341.

[23] The present king of Jordan, Abdullah bin Hussein, never was crown prince as long as his father was alive.

[24] If one attributes a probability p $(0 < p < 1)$ for the reconstruction of textual stratum n+1 on the basis of stratum n (the final text, the topsoil of literary criticism, representing stratum 0), the reconstruction of literary stratum n has the probability of p^n. In the humanities a result with $p \geq 0.95$ can safely be regarded as a white elephant; most scholars will be – and can be – content with $p \geq 0.8$. In this case,

redactional criticism only works for the last 3-4 strata. For earlier stages of the tradition, stratifying contents rather than the forms of their written expressions is the only feasible way. Once again: to treat the transmission of a text as if it were "oral", i.e. fluid, does by no means imply that the transmission had actually been oral; one might reasonably assume that re-writing and re-formulating the text was an option more of the earlier than the later stages of its transmission which, in the case of biblical literature, usually went the path from *belles lettres* to cultural, legal and ecclesiastic canon.

Content criticism cannot be based on the wording of the text. It rather takes into account the *realia* to which the texts refer – geography, political constellations, social, technological and cultural features. If the northernmost place mentioned in the "Historia" where a member of the ruling family holds possession is Baal Hazor (2 Samuel 13,23), how much of Israel did this family actually control, then? The Philistines were in a position of predominance vis-à-vis southern and central Palestine in the 11th and 10th centuries BCE never to be regained thereafter[25], but they did not act as a nation nor as a league of cities, but rather as individual city-states competing with all others[26]. If the Philistine (i.e. Gittite) vassal David butchered Philistines (2 Samuel 5,17-25; 21,15-22), the latter were most probably Ekronites. Content criticism goes hand in hand with *tendenzkritik* – whose interests does the text serve, and whose interests does it serve best? The hidden presupposition in this operation is, of course, the assumption that people always acted (and narrated) in their best self interests, and that their judgment of their situation agreed with ours. Content criticism is methodologically feasible if the historical benchmarks used to stratify the tradition are not retrieved from this very tradition itself[27].

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stratum 2 already sinks below the 0.68-level ($0.8^2 = 0.64$), and stratum 4 below the 0.5-mark ($0.8^4 = 0.41$).

[25] E.A. Knauf, Jerusalem in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Periods – a proposal: Tel Aviv 27 (2000) 75-90; Saul, David and the Philistines: from Geography to History: Biblische Notizen 109 (2001) 15-18.

[26] Carl S. Ehrlich, Die Suche nach Gat und die neuen Ausgrabungen auf Tell eṣ-Ṣāfī: U. Hübner / E.A. Knauf (eds.), Kein Land für sich allein. Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina und Ebernâri. Für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 186; Freiburg/Schweiz / Göttingen 2002) 56-69; H. Michael Niemann, Nachbarn und Gegner, Konkurrenten und Verwandte Judas: Die Philister zwischen Geographie und Ökonomie, Geschichte und Theologie: ibid., 70-92.

[27] E.A. Knauf, From History to Interpretation, in: D. Edelman (ed.), The Fabric of History. Text, Artefact and Israel's Past (Sheffield 1991) 26-64. This is by no means to imply that no historical data at all can be retrieved from literary texts. For the modern historians, it is nevertheless advisable to base the framework of their (re)constructions on data as "hard" as possible; it is also advisable to abstain from parochial terminology. There was a period of state formation in the history of ancient

The identification of Bathsheba, Maacah and Athaliah as the authorities most probably behind the making of the "History of Early Kings" is based on the most plausible answers to the questions: who controlled the traditions selected and presented? And who was most interested in presenting them the way they now are encountered?

1.4. Feasting, story-telling and the interface between the "Inner Circle" and society at large

In tribal societies, feasting serves as the interface between the ruling family and the lineages associated with it, for whose allegiance the chief constantly has to plead[28]. Feasting provides the opportunity to make the ruling family's story the story of the tribe, or the tribal state[29]. In order to be integrative, the story could not disregard what the people knew about the family and its dirty laundry, it could only suggest how they might perhaps think about it. The story had to be integrative already on the level of the "inner circle", those in power with the intention to keep it. This group was by no means homogeneous, neither on the level of the royal princes nor on that of the chief officials. The princes, through various mothers, had different ties to other great families (and, for sure, political positions as opposed to one another as to those held by their father). Among the officials, there was envy and competition. Conflicts resulted in murder and manslaughter more than once (2 Samuel 3,22-27; 13,23-29; 20,8-13). Vis-à-vis the lineages (or rather, their heads), the dynasty nevertheless had to come up with a story to which all could agree.

A tribal state, like Beth David, was, as already implied by its generic designation, very much a family business. *L'état, c'etait la famille royale: mère-reine, roi, reine, princesses, princes, et leurs esclaves (les ministres de l'état)*[30]. The narrative community of the Court history is nothing but the (slightly extended?) royal

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Israel/Palestine at the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE. A period of the "Judges", or of a "Davidic-Solomonic empire", did never exist.

[28] R.G. Hoyland, Arabia and the Arabs. From the Bronze Age to the coming of Islam (London / New York 2001) 134-138; H. Gaube, Die syrischen Wüstenschlösser. Einige wirtschaftliche und politische Gesichtspunkte zu ihrer Entstehung: Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina Vereins 95 (1979) 180-209; E.A. Knauf, Ismael (Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina Vereins; [2]1989) 101 and n. 553.

[29] E.A. Knauf, Bedouin and Bedouin States: Anchor Bible Dictionary I (1992) 634-638; id., Umwelt, 53f; 94f; 111; id., "Der sein Volk liebt". Entwicklung des Nabatäischen Handelsimperiums zwischen Stamm, Königtum und Klientel: Th. Weber / R. Wenning (eds.), Petra. Antike Felsstadt zwischen arabischer Tradition und griechischer Norm (Antike Welt Sonderheft; Mainz 1997) 14-24.

family. If trained narrators or scribes were employed in the process of production and transmission, their role was subsidiary. Whereas it is the king/the man who represents the family/the state to the outside world, it is generally a matriarch who controls the family's internal life and watches over customs and traditions.

The males, in the "Historia", are quite frequently represented as inconsiderate hotheads (2 Samuel 3,8.27; 11,2-5; 13,2-18; 14,28-31; 16,21f; 18,14; 20,9f). It is the women who show restraint, responsibility, wisdom or at least ruse (2 Samuel 13,12f, 14,2-20; 20,16-22; 21,10). Did the main authors – meaning the authorities behind them – of the "History" construct a – doubtlessly idealized – portrait of themselves?

1.5. The Queen Mother

Previous generations tried to define the "office" of the Queen Mother in ancient Judah[31]. She must have been important, for her name is given – with one exception – for every Judaean king. She also could lose her position, as happened to Maacah. But that she held an "office" might well be doubted. She rather had a function. First, she was the head of the "female household" (or harem), however the functions between "public" and "private"[32], male and female were organized in 10th century Judah. Tribal societies seem to allow their women a larger choice of roles, some of them rather "public", than eastern Mediterranaean urban societies[33]. It is by no means impossible to imagine Bathsheba and Maacah presiding over a dinner of the "inner circle", and Athaliah held the reins of government for six years for her infant son.

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[30] The word (and the early notion of) "State, Staat" is derivative from "the royal household, Hofstaat". Cf. also the British "Household Cavalry", still in existence, and the "Maison du Roi" of the Bourbon army (Gendarmes, Mosquetaires, Gardes suisses, Gardes françaises).

[31] H. Donner, Art und Herkunft des Amtes der Königinmutter im Alten Testament: id., Aufsätze zum Alten Testament aus vier Jahrzehnten (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 224; Berlin 1994) 1-24; Susan Ackerman, The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel: Journal of Biblical Literature 112 (1993) 385-401.

[32] The distinction of "public" and private is problematic for ancient (and not so ancient) Near Eastern societies, where it might be replaced by the opposition of "in the house / under the head of household" and "outside the house / beyond the sole control of the head of household". The one or the other of these distinctions is fundamental for the analysis of gender roles and restrictions, cf. Silvia Schroer, Häusliche und außerhäusliche religiöse Kompetenzen israelitischer Frauen – am Beispiel von Totenklage und Totenbefragung: lectio difficilior 1/2002.

[33] Hoyland, Arabia, 132-134 as opposed to "classical" Greece: Susane Moraw, Was sind Frauen? Bilder bürgerlicher Frauen im klassischen Athen: F. Zimmer et al. (ed.), Die Griechische Klassik: Idee oder Wirklichkeit[?]. (Ausstellungskatalog Berlin und Bonn 2002; Mainz 2002) 300-306; Anja Klöckner, Habitus und Status. Geschlechtsspezifisches Rollenverhalten auf griechischen Weihreliefs: ibid. 321-327. On the other hand, even in societies with severe restrictions on the public appearance of women, like 9th through 7th century Assyria or Late Ottoman Turkey, the political influence of the Queen Mother could be considerable.

Without recourse to additional hypotheses it can be stated that the Queen Mother was the living proof of the ruling king's legitimacy as was the "Historia" its ideological proof. She was the person who linked the kings, physically, to their fathers and forefathers. That her authority also covered the royal family's narrative link to the past, at least in part, seems to be a reasonable assumption[34].

2. Bathsheba's Story

"Was da [in 1 Kings 1,11-31] wirklich verhandelt wurde, konnte niemand wissen, auch der Erzähler nicht." On the basis of this observation, E. Würthwein concluded that 1 Kings 1 is not historiography and concluded further, with the sharp intellect of the 20th century German theologian, that its contents, then, cannot be historical[35]. On the basis of the same observation, Baruch Halpern proposes much more convincingly that we are reading Bathsheba's story: she is the only person who heard David swear that Solomon will be his successor[36] (1 Kings 1,17). It is on her that Solomon's legitimacy depends – a fact which is duly acknowledged by her son (1 Kings 2,19).

That Adoniah substituted for his incapacitated father (1 Kings 1,5-10) was a mere necessity of representation and governance in an Early (= tribal) State. He might have underestimated the power – or the ambitions – of the Jerusalemites by taking care of the king's Judaean relations in predominance (or, more likely, this was what he was told by, or had learned from, his father David). The story introduces two factions at the very beginning: the Jerusalemites (1,8) and the Judaeans (1,7). But the factionalism might well have been the outcome of the *coup d'état* by the Jerusalem clique rather than its starting point. Solomon was possibly not invited by Adoniah because that prince had no idea that another brother of his going under that name (or the name "Jedidiah") did exist (1,10). The story of Adoniah's downfall (1 Kings 2,13-25) depicts him as a village boy helplessly ensnared in the machinations of the court –

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[34] Cf. for female story-telling in recent Palestinian society: I. Muhawi / Sh. Kanaana, Speak, Bird, Speak Again. Palestinian Arab Folktales (Berkeley 1989).

[35] E. Würthwein, Die Erzählung von der Thronfolge Davids – theologische oder politische Geschichts-schreibung? Theologische Studien 115 (1974) 13f. = Studien zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 227; 1994) 35f.

[36] Even if the idea that she could have heard such a thing might have been proposed to her by Nathan, 1 Kings 1,11. In 1,15-30 the dramatic choreography is perfect: Bathsheba "reminds" the decrepit king of his promise (Bathsheba out; Nathan in) – Nathan reports an alleged act of illoyalty by the actual crown prince (Nathan out, Bathsheba in) – David is infuriated by the alleged illoyalty of Adoniah, disinherits him on the spot, and gratefully accepts the "forgotten" candidate brought into the game by Bathsheba. That Bathsheba, a woman from his harem, and Nathan, his political advisor in Jebusite affairs

and for his decisive self-destroying move (1 Kings 2,13-22), Bathsheba, again, is the only survivor to tell.

The story how Bathsheba ended up in the royal harem depends on her testimony solely (2 Samuel 11). Joab, who might have contradicted, was dead (2 Kings 2,28-34), killed for no other reason than having been allied to Adoniah (2,28)[37]. At the end of 2 Samuel 11, it is more than doubtful whether the son born to Bathsheba was fathered by David. For Judaean ears, her child by David was conceived on the 14th day of her cycle, which would have been ideal for the conception of a son (2 Samuel 11,4f)[38]. This reading presupposes that Bathsheba kept the traditional 7 days (Leviticus 12,2; 15,19) at the end of her period, and that the custom in question was already universally practiced by Judaean women in the 10th century. In the case of a Jerusalemite, her attendance to that law can be doubted; she presumably just took a bath after the end of the menstruation (or explained the bath that she did take in public and which brought her into the royal harem as taken for that purpose). In this case, a Jerusalemite audience clearly understood that Solomon was very probably not David's son. The very fact that Bathsheba's gynecological status on the day she met David is stated in such detail (and again, there can only be Bathsheba's word for it) fosters rather than diminishes suspicions concerning Solomon's legitimacy.

The story of the nameless son preceding the birth of Solomon is a fabrication (2 Samuel 12,14-18), as has already been observed[39]. But Nathan's parable (2 Samuel 12,1-7) must have been fabricated with it, and probably by the same co-authors,

(presumably) had decided on joint action, is unknown to David – or his anger would have been directed the other way.

[37] The reference to Absalom in the same verse, and the list of his trespasses in 2 Samuel 2,5f. 32, are probably redactional, presupposing the fully-grown tradition. On the other hand, features which were not narrated in Bathsheba's story might nevertheless have been alluded to, provided that they were common knowledge, which is not impossible in the case of the deeds and misdeeds of a public figure like the chief of the army, always having acted in broad daylight (with the exception of the Uriah affair, which is, accordingly, classified by B. Halpern as the one murder David did not commit).

[38] Sperms carrying a Y-chromosome survive for 24 hours at most. If, as Silvia Schroer, Die Samuelbücher (Neuer Stuttgarter Kommentar Altes Testament 7; Stuttgart 1992) 166 suggests, Bathsheba had intercourse 7 or 8 days after menstruation had set in, the conception of a son would have been all but impossible.

[39] T. Veijola, Salomo – der Erstgeborene Bathsebas: id., David. Gesammelte Studien zu den Davidüberlieferungen des Alten Testaments (Schriften der Finnischen Exegetischen Gesellschaft 52 Helsinki 1990) 84-105; id., Solomon: Bathsheba's firstborn: G. Knoppers / J. Gordon McConville (eds.), Reconsidering Israel and Judah. Recent studies on the Deuteronomistic history (Sources for biblical and theological study 8; Winona Lake, Indiana 2000) 340-357; E.A. Knauf, Le roi est mort, vive le roi! A Biblical Argument for the Historicity of Solomon: L.K. Handy (ed.), The Age of Solomon. Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 11; Leiden 1997) 81-95. The (intentional?) irony of 2 Samuel 12,14 is that all of David's

Bathsheba and Nathan. If Nathan would have told this story to the living David, he would hardly have lived to tell the story of his story-telling. To tell it about the dead David fits the anti-Davidic attitude of Bathsheba's story: here is a greedy, lusting king who betrays and exploits (2 Samuel 12, 26-31) the labors of his army. A repentant king might have endeared David to his Judaean peasants and other tribal followers (as it endears him to simple-minded Bible-bashers to this very day), it should have made him all the more despicable to his Jerusalemite court: the king's deeds are always just, and if they were not, nobody, not even the king himself, would be entitled to say so. In consequence, David (the David of Bathsheba's story) humbles himself before his "son" – after being thoroughly insulted by the latter's officials (1 Kings 1,47f)[40].

There is, however, no reason to attribute to Bathsheba's story more than the basic contents of 2 Samuel 11f; 1 Kings 1f, (*pace* Halpern[41]). Bathsheba makes Solomon a son of David (for the broader Judaean public), and a Jerusalemite and a son of the army for the court officials, especially of her following, and the army, reminding the army in the same vein how it was mistreated and abused by David. Solomon's conception and birth are linked to what most probably was David's greatest military success, the conquest of Rabbath-Ammon[42]. It is implicitly insinuated that Solomon might restore the imperial power that lately slipped out of David's hands (as derives from his pathetic picture in 1 Kings 1, and of what Maacah had to tell her generation). Bathsheba's story is a prime example of political double-talk: it shows (and says), how clever the conspirators were and how stupid David's faithful behaved who fell in every trap waiting for them, thus encouraging their clientele and discouraging their opponents. The story presents the last surviving Davidic prince as a conspirator and the conspirators as champions of legitimacy. Solomon is presented as David's son to the last loyal Judaeans, and as a true son of Jerusalem and of the army who in his turn has nothing to do with that despicable tyrant (and failure) David, as far as the very circles of power are concerned.

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sons were to die (Nathan and Bathsheba would make sure of that), whereas Solomon was most probably already 10 years of age when Bathsheba met David (see *infra*, n. 47).

[40] If it so happened, it is safe to assume that David did not survive Solomon's *coup* for long – if he survived long enough indeed to be humiliated in (and by) Bathsheba's story-telling.

[41] W. Dietrich, Das Ende der Thronfolgegeschichte: A. de Pury / Th. Römer (eds.), Die sogenannte Thronfolgegeschichte Davids. Neue Einsichten und Anfragen (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 176; Freiburg/Schweiz / Göttingen 2000) 38-69.

[42] See *infra*, § 3.2 with n. 60

Bathsheba's story is about how to establish power firmly (1 Kings 2,12.46), serving both as a piece of advice and an example for her followers and as a deterrent to her opponents. It is not a nice or pleasant story – but then, she had Nathan as co-author.

3. Maacah's Story

Maacah was a remarkable Queen Mother: she served two consecutive kings, and is the only one of whom it is ever stated that she was deposed (1 Kings 15,2.10.13). During her lifetime, she saw the imperialistic schemes of (David and) Solomon – or rather Nathan and Bathsheba? – falter. The Beth-David had to accommodate a rather restricted and marginal position in world politics. And she was the daughter of Absalom[43], a fact which restituted a real Davidic pedigree to her sons[44]. Her first task was to re-establish the reputation of her father, implicitly tarnished by Bathsheba's representation of his last surviving brother, Adoniah, as a rebel of boorish bearings[45]. As Absalom's daughter, she would have had access to family memories (partially preserved, without doubt, by faithful servants of long standing) in order to compensate for any "ban" of the rebel's name potentially imposed by Solomon and his son.

3.1. Absalom's revolt

Whether Bathsheba married Maacah to Solomon's son Rehoboam as a potential asset vis-à-vis the Judaeans or to make sure of her silence (or both), we cannot know. It stands to reason that Maacah's marriage was not happy[46]. There is even more reason to assume on the basis of the Maacah–Rehoboam liaison that Solomon was certainly born before David encountered Bathsheba[47]. Bathsheba coyly hints at David having

[43] 1 Kings 15,2.10; 2 Chronicles 11,20f; Halpern, Demons, 386f; *pace* Kratz, Komposition, 33 n. 17. That Absalom's daughter bears the same name as Absalom's mother (2 Samuel 3,3) is a strong argument for the relationship. 1 Samuel 14,27 (the name of Absalom's daughter was Tamar) and 2 Chronicles 13,2 (the name of Maacah's father was Uriel) look like attempts to disclaim the obvious (1 Samuel 14,27 might represent an alternative view that not Maacah's aunt, but elder sister was raped by Amnon; alternatively, Maacah could have adopted her "dynastic" name at her marriage).
[44] According to the reading of 2 Samuel 11f proposed above, it might have been an open secret at court that Solomon and hence Rehoboam were not.
[45] Even if the explicit link to Absalom in 1 Kings 1,6 was not yet part of the story, every contemporanian should still have been aware of the fact that two Davidic princes in a row tried and failed.
[46] Cf. *infra* § 3.3.
[47] Note that David never sees his alleged son in 1 Kings 1 – until it is too late. With the year of Solomon's accession = 0, the following approximative chronology is proposed: -30/25 Solomon*; -20

raped her, Maacah starts her family's story with the rape of her aunt Tamar (2 Samuel 13,1-19). David appears as detached from daily affairs as he already did in Bathsheba's story. In the most favorable of interpretations, this shows him semi-senile and unable to keep his house (= state) in order, a task which then inevitably fell to the princes who, like Adoniah (1 Kings 1,5f.9) and Absalom (2 Samuel 13,29; 15,2-4[48]), got burned in the process. In the most distracting of interpretations, David waits behind the scene for the fittest to survive – or at least, to show up, before he casts his own lot in with him. David loses the support of Judah, which turns to Absalom, and of Israel, which sides with him (but without proclaiming him king). Absalom claims the kingship of Judah (2 Samuel 15,10!), but not that of Israel. His personal experiences up north (2 Samuel 13,37f) might have taught him that Judah would never have the economic substance and the military power to compete on the scene up north[49], where not only the trees were higher and greener, but also the cities larger and the people more prosperous. Absalom is the ruler Maacah wanted her son and grandson to be[50]: ruling with the backing of the Judaean people, and in accordance with, but not claiming rule over, Israel.

David smashes Israel and Judah by means of his Philisto-Canaanite military elite and mercenaries, who would become precisely the agents of his house's undoing in the male line by the machinations of Bathsheba and Nathan. At the end, David is re-installed as king of Judah, but not of Israel: Israel, henceforward, was occupied territory[51], and to which extent, will be shown by the story of Sheba's revolt, which continues Maacah's story.

Ammonite war; -10/5 Rehoboam*, Maacah*; -5 Absalom d.; 5/10 Maacah ∞ Rehoboam. Maacah can hardly have been older than her husband, who came to reign at the rather advanced age of 41, and outlived both him and his successor.

[48] A certain amount of ambiguity in Absalom's behavior and character might easily be due to the 7th century (Manassite) literary redaction which, for reasons of legitimacy and the state's stability, should have refrained from presenting an unmitigated positive picture of a rebel.

[49] Kinneret, the capital of Geshur, was twice as large as David's Jerusalem (based on Knauf's maximalist reconstruction of the latter in Tel Aviv 27 (2000) 75-90) or even five to ten times as large (based on G. Lehmann's minimalist reconstruction (G. Lehmann, The United Monarchy in the Countryside: Judah and the Shephelah during the 10th Century BCE, forthcoming)).

[50] Cf. also D. Daube, Absalom and the ideal king: Vetus Testamentum 48 (1998) 315-325.

[51] H. Donner, Geschichte des Volkes Israel und seiner Nachbarn in Grundzügen I (Das Alte Testament Deutsch 4/1; Göttingen ²1995) 240: "David regierte hinfort nicht mehr als König über Israel, sondern als Tyrann."

3.2. Sheba's revolt

Sheba's revolt as told in 2 Samuel 20 demonstrates that in the aftermath of Absalom's defeat, Israel – which had shrunk, as far as it still was under Jerusalem's control, to no more than Benjamin – was in open rebellion, and the tribe of Judah was unwilling to invest any more time and energy into Davidic politics. In defeating Absalom, David had won a Pyrrhic victory, says Maacah.

In order to conceptualize Maacah's version of the Sheba story, some historical criticism is in order. David has his army assemble at Gibeon (2 Samuel 20,8). The Judaean militia being unwilling to show up (20,5f), there is only the mercenary force of ca. 600 to assemble (20,7 with 2 Samuel 15,18[52]). Joab jumps them from Gibeon to Abel-Bet-Maacah (20,8.14f) in the far north, and threatens the town with total devastation:

> Joab's forces came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-Maacah; they threw up a siege-ramp against the city, and it stood against the rampart. Joab's forces were battering the wall to break it down (20,15).

Abel Bet-Maacah capitulates and the army is disbanded on the spot (20,22). In this form, the story contains several improbabilities, if not impossibilities.

- Abel-Bet-Maacah is called a "city and mother in Israel". "In" Israel, Abel never was situated. For some time, but probably not in the 10th century, it marked, together with Ijon, its northern border[53].

- Some pages before, the reader learned that a contingent from the kingdom of Abel Beth-Maacah fought on the side of the Aramaean-Ammonite coalition against David[54]. Abel Beth Maacah, then, had been an Aramaean petty kingdom some

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[52] Here it is this reader's impression that the same troops are counted thrice: the "600 Gittites" are all "Kerethites and Pelethites" (being Philistian subjects) and at the same time "all his [David's] men". Performances of Verdi's "Aïda", so one hears, frequently make use of the same device. There should be no doubt, though, that 600 heavily armed, trained and disciplined soldiers must have been more than a match for any tribal levy within a radius of several hundred miles.

[53] At least in 2 Kings 15,29 (as a remnant of Jeroboam's II conquests); 1 Kings 15,20 is problematic, because shaped or partially reshaped (is something missing here?) after the model of 2 Kings 15,29; 16,7-9. In his Dan inscription, Hazael as the heir of the kingdom of Zobah claims possession (or suzerainty) of Dan, only temporarily ceded (or lost) to the Omrides. The same would the more so hold true for Beth-Maacah north of Dan.

[54] 2 Samuel 10,6.8. It is not impossible that David's forces clashed indeed with Aramaean contingents in the course of the Rabbath-Ammon campaign. As far as trade relations go, central and eastern Ammon were without strategic significance in the 11th and 10th centuries (this was to change in the 8th and 7th centuries), and more than the far too high number of troops involved in 2 Samuel 10 suggests that at least the elaboration of the Aramaean war, if not the "war" itself, postdate rather than predate Qarqar 853 (David would have killed 40.000 out of a total of 43.000, made up of contingents reaching from 1000 to 20.000 – a higher percentage of casualties inflicted than Shalmanassar dared to boast in his most outrageously doctored reports on Qarqar).

years before. Its conquest by David is nowhere narrated[55]. Also, in this case, the "city and mother" epithet would be as unintelligible as the reference to the long-establish custom of asking Abel Beth-Maacah for advice (vis-à-vis a Judaean general).

- If Joab would have disbanded the army on the spot, none of them would have made it home through the hostile and non-Judaean-controlled city and tribal territories between Abel Beth-Maacah and Gibeon/Jerusalem.
- Joab threatens the city with a military device which the Judaeans learned, to their horror, from Sennacherib in 701[56]. He could as well have tried to nuke the place. His 600 soldiers would never have sufficed to execute such siege-works.

It is, then, highly unlikely that the confrontation with the "wise woman" actually took place at Abel Beth-Maacah. Together with the Assyrian siege techniques applied, the place is a 7th century addition imposing on 2 Samuel 20 the concept of a "United Monarchy" from Dan to Beersheba (not a 10th century concept at all), and turning Maacah's story upside down: instead of Israel and Judah largely lost to the Beth-David, the text as it stands now depicts an Israel and Judah largely submitted to David with the exception of one single clan and one city, the latter soon coming to terms. The most likely candidate for the wise woman's city is Gibeon. To Gibeon, the reference of a "City and Mother" *in* Israel (not: *of* Israel) of long-standing fame suits

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[55] This is telling – failures and defeats are usually passed over in silence, but not victories, especially not in far away countries. As Halpern has convincingly shown, the Beth-David court propagandists before and after Maacah made the most of probably quite trite events. What would they have written, if David had conquered Beth-Maacah indeed (and Geshur before, which he must have passed on his way to Beth-Maacah)! Geshur was David's ally because Israel was a neighbor which both shared (Halpern); the same principle could have sent a Judaean army against Beth-Maacah in support of Geshur – but in this case, the other objections raised against the possibility of an actual encounter between Joab and Abel Beth-Maacah rest in place.

[56] Did Sennacherib attribute so much wall space to the siege of Lachish because it was the first time that the Assyrian army's newly established corps of engineers proved itself? It seems that Tiglatpileser III did not yet command such a device (Schroer, Samuelbücher, 185 Abb. 33), and Samaria would not have been besieged for three years if the Assyrians had these rampart-and-undermining tactics already at their disposal 724-720. Shalmanassar was definitely powerless before the city walls of Damascus 841/840 (an experience which induced the large-scale fortification of Israelite and Judaean cities, towns and villages in the 8th century). The Damascenes, Hazael and his successor(s), did not build ramparts but employed circumvallation ditches at Gath and Hamath (Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften 202,9f; also a very manpower-consuming means out of reach of Joab before the walls of Abel Beth-Maacah). In the 15th century, the Egyptian army sat around Megiddo for seven months waiting for the besieged to tire from the boring game first, and gave them very favorable terms when the Canaanites finally sued for peace – presumably, because the Egyptians did not know what else to do.

well[57]. If "Gibeon" stood in the original text of 2 Samuel 20, it becomes obvious why Athaliah inserted 2 Samuel 21* at this place (see *infra*, § 4.1).

"All Israel" to which Sheba appealed can only mean Benjamin if it is explicitly stated that he found support only in his native Benjaminite clan[58]. David summons the army to Gibeon to deny Sheba access to the city, and fails because of Amasa's inefficiency (or sabotage). We cannot know what Joab threatened Gibeon with, but in any case, his threats were empty: after the defection of the Israelites, David did not have the manpower to confront Gibeon effectively (and Solomon had to wait for Shoshenq[59] to do the job for him)[60]. That the wise woman expresses her

[57] Joshua 10,1-10; 1 Samuel 10,5.10.26; Jeremiah 28,1. It is presupposed that Gibeon is the place where Saul seeks information concerning his father's missing donkeys, and the urban base of his tribal kingdom in his earlier years. Eshbaal's move of his residence across the Jordan might have been due to the fall-out between the Beth-Shaul and Gibeon (not narrated, but presupposed by 2 Samuel 21) rather than an imaginary Philistine threat. Quite evidently, Gibeon kept its independence vis-à-vis Saul, Eshbaal and David quite well (and served as neutral ground in 2 Samuel 2,12f which could also explain why Sheba looked for asylum at this place), probably as efficiently as Jerusalem which gained supremacy over the tribe of Judah with Solomon's *putsch* (and finally subdued tribal Judah under Hezekiah and Manasseh). Gibeon seems to have preserved a non-Israelite, "Canaanite" identity well into the 5th century (when Joshua 9 was inserted into the Exodus-Joshua narrative), and to have made the surrounding Israelites and Judaeans preserve that memory, too. At least on the level of 5th century readings, Saul's (and by this fact, Israel's first) capital could no longer be called "Gibeon". It is, however, also conceivable that it was Athaliah who obliterated the memory of a Canaanite city a little bit too independent in the heartland of Israel. Cf. J. Blenkinsopp, Gibeon and Israel (Cambridge 1972) 86; Diana V. Edelman: Anchor Bible Dictionary V, 993; G.W. Ahlström, The History of Ancient Palestine from the Palaeolithic Period to Alexander's Conquest, (ed.) D. Edelman (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 146; Sheffield 1993) 435f. The socio-political picture of 10th century Israel and Judah which is presently emerging resembles the situation in Persian Arabia (cf. E. A. Knauf, The Persian Administration in Arabia: Transeuphratène 2 (1990) 201-217): there were tribes and there were cities, forming alliances with and against each other, but basically belonging to two different political sub-systems. It was not before the Omrides that the Canaanite cities politically became part of Israel (Finkelstein, Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina Vereins 116/2 (2000) 114-138).

[58] On a level of "Israel" including Benjamin it would have been necessary to state that Sheba found support "by some (wicked) men of his tribe Benjamin"; Israelites from northern Ephraim or Asher were not supposed to know the genealogy of Benjamin by heart.

[59] It is presupposed that Shoshenq's Karnak list summarizes the results of several campaigns, extending over a considerable period, and resulting in a mild form of Egyptian suzerainty over Phoenicia and Phoenicia's Aramaean and Israelite *hinterland* (comparative to the French "protection" of the "Province of Lebanon" within the Ottoman empire following 1860) until some time after the battle of Qarqar 853, in which 1000 Egyptian soldiers (probably the garrisons of Sidon and Tyre) participated. Cf. preliminarily E.A. Knauf, Shoshenq at Megiddo: Biblische Notizen 107/108 (2001) 31.

[60] The fortifications of Rabbath Bene Ammon, as depicted by 2 Samuel 11,20-24 (in contradiction to 11,17, with the possible intention to alleviate David's crime – if you abandon a comrade in hand-to hand-fighting, you should be expelled from the army; if you place him where he was hit by an arrow – well, you did not fire the shot); 12,26-28, probably reflect architectural realities of the 8th and 7th centuries when there are archaeological indications of a "water suburb", a lower and upper city. Cf. recently F. Zayadine / J.-B. Humbert / M. Najjar, Yhe 1988 Excavations on the Citadel of Amman – Lower Terrace, Area A: Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan 33 (1989) 357-363; J.A. Greene / Khairieh 'Amr, Deep sounding on the lower terrace of the Amman citadel: final report: Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan 36 (1992) 113-144, 126f; J.-B. Humbert / F. Zayadine, Trois campagnes de fouilles à Amman (1988-1991). Troisième Terrasse de la Citadelle: 99 (1992) 214-260. On the Ammonite capital in the 10th century, one cannot state with more confidence that it probably did exist. That the Ammonites fight before their own fortifications (2 Samuel 10,8.14;

loyalty to "Israel" implies that there was another faction opposed to Sheba's extradition. The affair settled, the army could have been disbanded, probably being provided with Benjaminite rather than Judaean fiefs[61].

In Maacah's version, the Sheba story is the prologue to Bathsheba's intrigue: David had cut himself off from the roots which carried him to power, and would now rule depending on the mercy of his praetorian guard. The attempt to subjugate Israel has led to nearly nothing – no more than a precarious hold on Benjamin.

3.3. Solomon at Gibeon

Having demonstrated that Gibeon was virtually independent of Jerusalem during the last years of David's rule, Maacah pointedly adds Solomon's recognition by Gibeon, 1 Kings 3* (which to attain he had to go to the place) to Bathsheba's full-mouthed proclamation that the kingdom was firmly established in the hands of Solomon (1 Kings 2,12.46) – but to which extent? The claim might have held true for Jerusalem, but not for the area immediately north of it, which represented Jerusalem's bread-basket until Hezekiah occupied (and Josiah re-occupied) the Shephelah and Manasseh secured for Jerusalem a position of strategic and long-range commercial importance[62]. During the last years of David and the early years of Solomon also the Negev, David's first and original power base, must have been lost, because Shoshenq had to re-conquer it (Numbers 66 to 140 of the Karnak-List) so that Solomon could build Thamar "in the desert, in the land [of Judah]" (1 Kings 9,18).

Solomon's coming to terms with Gibeon opposes him positively to his son and successor who failed to win Shechem in his turn (depicting her husband even more negatively than her cutthroat father-in-law Solomon, Maacah indicates that there was not much love lost between her and her husband). Of the towns or cities north of Jerusalem subdued by Shoshenq: Kirjathaim (= Kirjath Jearim = Baalath Judah),

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11,17) – reminding the reader of the way the Trojan war was fought in Homer's narrative – might suggest that they did not put too much faith in their city's walls if there were any. In such a situation, mere manpower, provided by the Israelites, not thinly settled Judah, did make a difference. But Israel's "election" of David as her king might have had no deeper roots in the population than the Palestinian's "election" of Abdullah as "King of Jerusalem" in 1949 (B. Wasserstein, Divided Jerusalem. The Struggle for the Holy City (London [2]2002) 165), and many Israelites who willingly followed David on an expedition of pillage and plunder into Ammon might well have refused to pay him allegiance in matters less appealing to them.

[61] Benjamin was the richer country, and it was conquered. Is there a reflection of the military fiefs in Benjamin in 1 Samuel 8,14?

Beth-Horon and Gibeon, it is only Gibeon which was not (re-)fortified by Solomon (1 Kings 9,17f) – was he glad to be finally rid of this nail in the flesh of his kingdom?

3.4. The End of Aspirations to Empire

Maacah turned Bathsheba's story into an anti-Bathsheba-story by showing how the aspirations to power, might and glory, strongly expressed at the end of 1 Kings 2, undid themselves and finally came to nothing, and this within Maacah's lifetime. Thus were rehabilitated the politics of her father Absalom. Of the redactional conglomerate 1 Kings 11, at least the Jeroboam passage (11,26-28.40) needs to be attributed to Maacah in order to prepare for 1 Kings 12[63]. By trying to impose forced labor on the tribes of central Israel, Solomon overextended his means of control. By stupidly adopting this policy of his father, Rehoboam lost Israel once and for all. Telling the story this way, Maacah might have intended to give a warning example to her descendants, the future kings of Judah (who were, and only through her, again descendants of David whereas Solomon and Rehoboam were not), how not to rule badly.

The *mas* imposed on the Israelites (1 Kings 11,28; 12,4.18) clearly set 1 Kings 11f* apart from 1 Kings 9,15-23, where the opposite is stated. Whether forced labor really was a means of Solomonic policy towards Israel is less certain[64].

The following historical chain of events is presupposed by the present author: Solomon established links to the tribes from Benjamin through the Jezreel by co-

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[62] Cf. the demographic and geographic data in I. Finkelstein, The Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh: M.D. Coogan / J.C. Exum / L.E. Stager (eds.), Scripture and Other Artefacts. Essays in Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philipp J. King (1994) 169-187 and Carter, Yehud (n. 7).

[63] In partial contradiction to, but fully appreciative of the insights in, Diana V. Edelman, Solomon's Adversaries Hadad, Rezon and Jeroboam: A Trio of "Bad Guy" Characters Illustrating the Theology of Immediate Retribution: S.W. Holloway / L.K. Handy (eds.), The Pitcher is Broken. Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 190; Sheffield 1995) 166-191; E. Bosshard-Nepustil, Hadad, der Edomiter. 1 Könige 11,14-22 zwischen literarischem Kontext und Verfassergegenwart: R.G. Kratz / Th. Krüger / K. Schmid (eds.), Schriftauslegung in der Schrift. Festschrift für Odil Hannes Steck zu seinem 65. Geburtstag (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 300; Berlin u.a. 2000) 95-109.

[64] Ado(ni)ram ("Adoram" and "Adoniram" are two variants of the same name) is presented as having served three consecutive kings in the same high function, two of which are credited with extremely long reigns (2 Samuel 20,24; 1 Kings 4,6; 5,28; 12,18). Instead of assuming that he was between 110 and 120 years old when he finally met his fate in the service of Rehoboam, it seems safer to regard 12,18 as his primary attestation, and the institute of "forced labor" an innovation on the part of Rehoboam, especially in the Shechem area (cf. n. 66). To link the *mas* with the construction of Jerusalem (11,28) and especially with the temple (5,27f) has already an apologetic touch.

opting local nobles (1 Kings 4,8-14*)[65]. He might have changed his approach of "indirect rule" after Shoshenq conquered the Canaanite cities north of Jerusalem. Solomon probably died before the Egyptians subdued the Canaanite cities surrounding Israel – like Taanach and Penuel. Rehoboam lusted for this territory, too; but the Egyptians decided rather to back an indigenous Israelite (there also was a shift in the economic center of Israel/Palestine in these days: from Philistia with its Judaean periphery to Phoenicia with its Aramaean and Israelite periphery, and Judah changing places with Israel as the periphery of the periphery). More important than the decision of the caucus of Shechem[66] might have been an Egyptian demonstration against Jerusalem in Rehoboam's 5th year, putting him in its place (Shoshenq was also dead by now[67]).

Like all Ancient Near Eastern literature (with the possible exception of some of the "prophets"), Maacah's story is myopic in the sense that she suppresses the decisive, international part of the story of Judah's dismissal from Israelite politics and narrates a purely ethnocentric story instead. The story was intended to foster the links between the House of David and the tribe of Judah, so it was deemed sufficient to provide the Judaeans with a political horizon just reaching to the level of their own queens and kings. That their kings only gained, and stayed in, power as the interface between them and the paramount state, Egypt, they did not need to know (and if they did nevertheless, this knowledge need not be fostered by its integration into the dynastic myth)[68].

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[65] Cf. H.M. Niemann, Megiddo and Solomon: A biblical investigation in relation to archaeology: Tel Aviv 27 (2000) 61-74; E. A. Knauf, Solomon at Megiddo?: J.A. Dearman / M.P. Graham (eds.), The Land that I Will Show You. Essays on the History and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East in Honour of J. Maxwell Miller (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 343; Sheffield 2001) 119-134, for a likely reconstruction of Solomon's politics vis-à-vis Israel and a possibly Solomonic core document in 1 Kings 4.

[66] Which seems to have been largely unsettled in the late 11th and early 10th century (the Shechem III volume was not available yet to the present author by the time of writing). Does the story of Rehoboam's rejection at Shechem derive from the city's re-foundation as an Israelite center stimulated by economic incentives from the north?

[67] The hieroglyphs of Shoshenq's name became a *nomen sacrum* and "sign of power" on Israelite and Judaean seals of the 9th and 8th centuries (cf. Ch. Uehlinger, Götter, Göttinnen und Gottessymbole [4](1998) 536-537), allowing for the assumptions that Shoshenq's successors were known in Jerusalem under the same "title" like, vice versa, the Egyptian title "Great House" became the biblical proper name "Pharaoh" (by profession, king of Egypt). Jerusalem did not pay tribute to the Egyptians prior to Shoshenq's 21st year, or it would be included in the Karnak list (there is no lacuna in the list where the name of "Jerusalem" would fit).

[68] In the Tell Fehheriye inscription, Hadad-Yith'i is a "governor" according to the imperial Akkadian version and a "king" in the local Aramaic; cf. A.R. Millard, The Tell Fekheriyeh inscriptions: A. Biran et al. (ed.), Biblical archaeology today, 1990. Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical archaeology; Jerusalem, June – July 1990 (Jerusalem 1993) 518-524.

3.5. Maacah's dismissal

The reason given for Maacah's dismissal (1 Kings 15,13) as Queen Mother reflects in its present context the late 7th or one of the following centuries. That the Queen Mother of the Beth-David should have taken care of the Queen-Mother-That-There-Is-In-Heaven should, in the early 9th century, have been the rule rather than an exception[69]. As Christian Frevel has shown, Maacah's relationship to Asherah is probably the kernel of the tradition, which was later elaborated into a piece of mysotheaic deuteronomistic censorship[70]. In the original note, possibly inserted by someone rather sympathetic with Maacah, it could be read as criticism of Asherah (why did she not protect her queen better?) or of Asa (how could he act so irreverently, not only to his [Grand]-mother but also to the supreme goddess?).

The real reason for Maacah's disposal is probably to be seen in the Judaean-Damascene alliance[71] which lead to the Judaean re-conquest of southern Benjamin (1 Kings 15,22). The rise of Damascus in the north, as a mounting threat to Israel, nourished a resurgence of Judaean imperialistic desires directed towards Israel – and this was exactly the policy Maacah had opposed by her tale. This imperialistic resurgence was not to succeed or to last, at least not during this century. When the Jerusalem court came to terms with its own marginality, once again, Maacah, by now the great-grandmother of the princes and princesses, was probably gone.

4. Athaliah's Story

In Bathsheba's story (partially unwillingly, but all the more convincingly) and in Maacah's additions to it, the picture projected of David, Solomon and Rehoboam was a bleak one. The world was a battlefield, today's victors becoming tomorrow's vanquished. If Maacah had hoped to establish a tradition of stability and peaceful co-existence of Israel and Judah, her demise cast her labors in limbo.

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[69] The feature does not attribute to her, though, more cultic responsibilities as had the king vis-à-vis Yhwh; *pace* Susan Ackerman, The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel: Journal of Biblical Literature 112 (1993) 385-401; and cf. for the cultic functions of the king in pre-exilic Judah (2 Samuel 15,12; 1 Kings 3,4; 8,5. 62-64; 12,32 &c).

[70] Ch. Frevel, Aschera und der Ausschließlichkeitsanspruch YHWHs (Bonner Biblische Beiträge 94; Bodenheim 1995) vol. I, 533-538.

[71] Whether there really was an alliance, remains doubtful (the text 15,18f seems to be shaped according to the model of 2 Kings 16,7-9, where "alliance" definitely would not have been the expression used by Tiglatpileser to qualify the relationship). It is possible that the invasion of Benjamin was just an opportunistic act, taking advantage of Israel's preoccupation with another front, on the part of Judah.

With Athaliah, peace and stability were achieved, at least for a while. Her's was a political marriage (2 Kings 8,26) which stabilized Judah as an Israelite vassal[72]. Through her, the Omrides ruled from Dan to Beersheba. With her came, in all probability, an entourage of scribes, artists and court attendants who brought some notion of Phoenician-Israelite refined civilization to the "wild South" of Canaan[73]. Athaliah had no need to represent the dynasties preceding the Omrides as failures – history had already proven that point and everybody knew it; and, in the case of the Beth-David, Maacah had already done this job. She could afford to stress the positive aspects of ancient history, i.e. those achievements, accomplished by or ascribed to the early kings, which lead to their future, Athaliah's present.

4.1. Saul takes precedence

Whereas the Saul tradition was by no means suited to placate the Benjaminites under Judaean occupation (it rather should have encouraged their resistance to it), the tradition became useful to Athaliah for making her first point: the North always took precedence (not true for the early 10th century, but very true for the 9th), and Israelite kingship started with Saul, not with David (probably true)[74]. Saul is depicted as a tragic hero – he founded the kingdom of Israel, so he was a hero, but he failed in the end (it was not his dynasty that ruled Israel around 850 BCE), and lost his life in the last battle he fought (1 Samuel 31,1-6 ≠ 2 Samuel 1,6-10; probably true, but so did Cyrus the Great) which, however, did not impede Abner and Eshbaal from expanding the kingdom[75] (2 Samuel 2,8f; probably true). The young David is represented as having entered Saul's service, and having risen through it (like Jeroboam I in the service of Solomon, 1 Kings 11,26-28; 3 Kingdoms 12,24a-z). He becomes Saul's

[72] Did Shoshenq establish the giving of brides (1 Kings 9,16; cf. on the historical problems involved, B.U. Schipper, Salomo und die Pharaonentochter – zum historischen Kern von 1 Könige 7,8: Biblische Notizen 102 (2000) 84-94; K. Jansen-Winkeln, Anmerkungen zu 'Pharaos Tochter': Biblische Notizen 103 (2000) 23-29; B.U. Schipper, Nocheinmal zur Pharaonentochter – ein Gespräch mit Karl Jansen-Winkeln: Biblische Notizen 111 (2002) 90-98) as a sign of political superiority? – In recent Arab society, the bride-taking side is regarded as socially superior (Katharina Hackstein, Ethnizität und Situation. Ǧaraš – eine vorderorientalische Kleinstadt (Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B 94; Wiesbaden 1989); under the New Empire, diplomatic marriages expressed equality in status.
[73] As a measure of the difference between north and south in 9th century Israel/Palestine, it suffices to compare the elegance of the Israelite stamp seals with the crude manufacture of their Judaean counterparts, cf. Götter, Göttinnen und Gottessymbole, fig. 210-215; 241-241c; 244-259b for Israel and fig. 233; 265a-272d for Judah.
[74] From a geographical point of view, nothing excludes the possibility that Saul's and David's careers commenced at approximately the same time; David's only lasted longer.
[75] Knauf, Biblische Notizen 109 (2001) 16.

son-in-law, quite like Athaliah's husband was Ahab's son-in-law. There is an *entente cordiale* between David and Jonathan, Israel's future (1 Samuel 20). After David had been introduced to Saul's court (on the narrative level[76]), the very fact that David's and Solomon's aspirations to kingship over Israel after Eshbaal's death were already documented by Bathsheba's and Maacah's stories necessitated a transition from Saul the hero to Saul the failure; a *deus ex machina* came in handy: Saul is jealous of the future (represented by David and Jonathan[77]) which, as Athaliah and her auditory knew, contained no place for him or his 'house'[78].

4.2. Young David and the Judaean South

In order to balance Saul and David as an interlocked pair of forerunners of the Omride state, Athaliah had necessarily to transform David into a hero, too – something he was not at all, as perceived through the eyes of Bathsheba and Maacah. Athaliah could draw on extra- and (possibly) pre-Jerusalemite David-Traditions, when Omride Judah/Jerusalem started to expand into southern Judah (Arad XI) and towards the Shephelah (Lachish V)[79]. Incorporating the Hebronite (and Negebite?) David-traditions into the story of Beth-David helped the ideological integration of rural southern Judah into the state of Jerusalem[80]. The expansion into the Shephelah would have been impossible without the backing of Gath, in the early 9th century the

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[76] Historically, the matter of this feature's historicity cannot be decided; thus Halpern, Demons, 284; whereas Kratz, Komposition, 182f; 187; 190f casts his vote in for the negative.

[77] In this constellation with its inherent homoerotic subtext, Athaliah, the cultivated urban Israelite, possibly mocked the Judaean village aristocracy who, like most peasant societies throughout the world, probably abhorred homosexuality (leading to Leviticus 18,22; 20,13, also reflected by Genesis 19): cf., as an illustration of the opposition of city and village in this respect, S. Schroer / Th. Staubli, Saul, David and Jonathan – The story of a triangle? A contribution to the issue of homosexuality in the First Testament: Athalya Brenner (ed.), Samuel and Kings. A feminist companion to the Bible (Second Series 7; Sheffield 2000) 22-36; H. Brunner, Gen 19 und das "Frauenverbrechen": Biblische Notizen 44 (1988) 21-22. Was it Athaliah who inserted, if not composed, 2 Samuel 1,19-27, a thorn in the mind of homophobic bigots (usually of boorish extraction) to this very day? Cf. the apt response to one of these by M. Nissinen, Die Liebe von David und Jonatan als Frage der modernen Exegese: Biblica 80 (1999) 250-263. At the same time, Jonathan is represented (within the framework of Mediterranaean *machismo*) as unfit to rule (cf. Sueton, Divus Iulius 49,1-4 and Caesar's response, 22,2 – but Jonathan was no Caesar, mentally; David might have been).

[78] The stories of Saul's divine rejection(s) are later theological elaborations which show quite well that transmitted historical tradition had no knowledge of such a thing, cf. Donner, Verwerfung (n. 11). The possible exception 1 Samuel 14 shows Saul as an over-lenient parent – on the model of David in 2 Samuel 13-2 Kings 1? – and does not "reject" him outright. It rather shows his kingdom slightly flawed, comparable to 2 Samuel 3,6-4.12; 21,1-14. These anecdotes betray the light hand of a cultivated author who prefers to hint and to insinuate rather than to show or indoctrinate.

[79] Finkelstein, Levant 32 (2001) 105-115.

[80] Micah 1,3-16; 3,8-12; 5,2, though, show that Judaean opposition to Jerusalem was well and alive even 150 years after Athaliah.

dominant city of Philistia and in control of the southern trade[81]. Gath, in all probability, was allied to the Omrides rather than opposed to them, if the fate of the city under Hazael allows any inferences[82]. That the historical David had been a vassal of Gath, and had helped his suzerain to overthrow Ekron, the dominant Philistine inland city of the 11th and early 10th centuries, is quite likely[83]. But it was under Athaliah and within the horizon of her (and her father's) interest that the fact became part of the story.

4.3. The United Kingdom of the Omrides, foreshadowed

It was not necessary for Athaliah to downgrade David and Solomon, because her predecessors had already done this job for her. She could afford to upgrade them to forerunners of the United Kingdom of the Omrides, stretching – through its Aramaean and Judaean vassals – from Dan to Beersheba. What had been a monument of Solomonic aspirations to the North (up to the Jezreel; 1 Kings 4,12*) became now, by an Omride addition to the list (1 Kings 4,15-19*), a document of virtual accomplishment of these desires to a degree unbeknownst to Solomon himself[84]. In order to balance this too optimistic representation of Solomon who achieved the goals temporarily which, as Athaliah could have hoped, Ahab had reached permanently, and in order not to disregard the old and well-founded anti-Solomonic resentment in the North, Athaliah added Damascus to his adversary Jeroboam in 1 Kings 11,23-25 – most probably using historically correct information. Damascus was, in all likelihood, beyond the political horizon of the historic Solomon, who never gained a firm foothold in northern Israel, and could less aspire to expansion beyond. But Damascus was of prime interest to the Omrides who were closely and efficiently allied with Aram, to their mutual benefit. Solomon had had his try, but Athaliah's political world was constituted by his adversaries, Jeroboam and Rezon.

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[81] Not incidentally, the "Feinan Copper Works" ceased production around the time when Gath fell to Hazael; cf. preliminarily E.A. Knauf, From Survey to History: Near Eastern Archaeology, in print.

[82] Gittite Gibbethon was attacked by Israel between Jeroboam I and Omri, 1 Kings 15,27; 16,15. Omri proceeded to kingship by lifting the siege, 1 Kings 16,17.

[83] For the details, Halpern, Demons, passim.

[84] Niemann, Tel Aviv 27 (2000) 61-74; Knauf, Solomon at Megiddo; J. Kamlah, Die Liste der Regionalfürsten in 1 Könige 4,7-19 als historische Quelle für die Zeit Salomos: Biblische Notizen 106 (2001) 57-78 adds little to Niemann and puts too much confidence in the (arbitrary) decision of the textual problem of 1 Kings 19. The position of Benjamin among the additions (4,18) is a strong argument for the diachronic solution as proposed by Knauf: under Solomon, Benjamin was under direct Judaean rule (and thus excluded from the list of "Northern Contacts"); under Omri, it had again become a part of (northern) Israel.

David's military successes were summarized in a literary[85] "display inscription" 2 Samuel 8*, where he is allowed to beat all of Israel's enemies with the exception of Damascus[86]. In order not to attribute too much impact of what might lead to a resurrection of Davidic aspirations towards the North (hopeless as such aspirations must have appeared in the first half of the 9th century), Athaliah de-legitimizes David's claim to the North by casting some shadow on, or rather mixing some shades of umbra and sepia into, his involvement in Saul's and Eshbaal's deaths – two great examples of politico-literary doublespeak (2 Samuel 1,1-15; 3,1-4.12[87]). The sophisticated hidden and immediate deconstruction of Athaliah's openly propagated hero culminates in David's treatment of Saul's descendants on the Gibeonites' request (2 Samuel 21,4-6), underlining his political impotence vis-à-vis a Canaanite city (or this city in particular) and his quick consent to abandon morals and family ties for political gains. The situation created by David, intolerable for any upright Israelite (and Judaean, probably, too) is alleviated by a woman keeping faith and protesting the royal act by her specific means (21,10-12)[88]. Did Athaliah leave a hint to herself, here?

On the surface of the text, David is but an honorable man. For those acquainted with the intrigues and machinations of power, he is the murderer behind the henchmen, and by killing these as unwanted witnesses, once the deed is done (2 Samuel 1,15f; 4,12; 1 Kings 2,5-6), or by eulogizing his victims (2 Samuel 1,19-27; 3,33f; 18,33), he adds to rather than alleviates the load of suspicion.

4.4. From Dark Ages to a Golden Age

David and Solomon were great (be proud of them, O Judaeans!), but Omri and Ahab are greater (so keep their alliance, O Judaeans, and be faithful to the father-in-law of your king as David should/would have been faithful to Saul). To mark the transition from the first to the latter, Athaliah uses a literary device well-attested in Ancient

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[85] With Na'aman, The Contribution of Royal Inscriptions for a Re-Evaluation of the Book of Kings as Historical Source: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 82 (1999) 3-17 against B. Halpern , The construction of the Davidic state: An exercise in historiography: P.R. Davies / V. Fritz (eds.), The origins of the ancient Israelite states: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 228 (1996) 44-75, a 9th rather than 10th century composition.

[86] Secondary within the Zobah-account 2 Samuel 8,8, 3f.7f, and anachronistic vis-à-vis 1 Kings 11,23-25 (the present author finds too many ad-hoc assumptions in Halpern's attempt to harmonize 2 Samuel 8,4f with 1 Kings 11,23f: Halpern, Demons, 197f).

[87] Linked by Rizpah 3,7 to 2 Samuel 21,1-14.

Near Eastern inscriptions and historiography: the past was a sad thing, but now your salvation has come, with the reign of the present king[89]. The "age of darkness" is constituted by some sort of a refrain:

There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker (2 Samuel 3,1).

There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually (1 Kings 14,30).

The rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? There was war between Abijam and Jeroboam (1 Kings 15,7).

There was war between Asa and King Baasha of Israel all their days (1 Kings 15,16).

There was war between Asa and King Baasha of Israel all their days (1 Kings 15,32).

For post-Saulide Israelite-Judaean conflicts, there were already the detailed stories of Absalom's, Sheba's and Jeroboam's revolts in the text, to a degree already covered by 2 Samuel 3,1. The "refrain" does not re-surface for any reign after Asa's, though not by a scarcity of conflict between the two states[90]. Its function, therefore, is literary-ideological rather than factographical.

The representation of Israelite-Judaean relations as a hundred-years war from David through the reign of Asa calls for a positive counterpart from the days of Athaliah. This might have read more or less like

Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea; they ate and drank and were happy (1 Kings 4,20).

During King XY's lifetime Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, all of them under their vines and fig trees (1 Kings 4,25).

These verses are now found, of course, within the Solomon-legend which has, however, other features derived from Omride history incorporated into it[91]. Although the memory of the Omride dynasty and its achievements is suppressed and blackened

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[88] Silvia Schroer, Häusliche und außerhäusliche religiöse Kompetenzen israelitischer Frauen – am Beispiel von Totenklage und Totenbefragung: lectio difficilior 1/2002.

[89] Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften 24; 215; and, augmented by a building account, Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften 214: 216. The same scheme, though in greater disorder, can also be discovered in the Mesha Stela, Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften 181.

[90] 2 Kings 9,27f; 14,9-14; 16,5.

[91] Notably 1 Kings 4* (immediately preceding the passage quoted?); the construction of the palace (the report containing one linguistic Israelitism, and for the archaeology cf. Finkelstein, Levant 32 (2001) 105-115); the Ezion-Geber-project 1 Kings 22,48f // 9,26; 10,11f.22 and cf. E.A. Knauf, King Solomon's Copper Supply: E. Lipinski (ed.), Phoenicia and the Bible (Studia Phoenicia XI; Leuven 1991) 167-186. Ancient Near Eastern parallels (Assyrian royal inscriptions, the Mesha Stela) give rise

to the best of the later biblical author's abilities, some details were simply too good to be completely discarded. The ideology of a golden age, as exemplified in the present version by the rule of Solomon, finds no iconographic corroboration in the imagery of 10th century seals, which continue (from the 11th century) to depict a dangerous, violent world. The great change to beauty, harmony and stability comes with the 9th century, which is already sufficient reason to attribute texts like 1 Kings 4,21.25 to the 9th rather than the 10th century. As has already, and variously, been demonstrated, the geographic expression "from Dan to Beersheba" can by no means be older.

4.5. Athaliah's demise

Athaliah's fall was inevitable after the undoing of the Omrides between Hazael and Jehu (the junior partner in the endeavor[92]). The fact that she continued for 6 years gives high credits to her ruling skills. After all, significant parts of the Judaean elite were not won over to Omride interests by her attempt to mildly glorify David. More important, Hazael, rising to suzerainty between the Euphrates and the Brook of Egypt, could not have been interested in a leftover from a dynasty which he smashed, ruling in a flanking position, when he disposed of Gath (another Davidic and Omride ally). Joram (or his advisors) paid their tribute in due course, and Athaliah's head (on a platter) might well have been the down-payment.

This said, the story of 2 Kings 21 can only be regarded as one of the ugliest biblical examples of besmirching a great person's (in this case, woman's) memory. Athaliah surely did not kill all the sons of the house of David (Bathsheba and Solomon did that), because her son was the sole source of her rule's legitimacy[93]. All that can be guessed from the story as far as historical information goes is that the conspirators managed somehow to get hold of the person of the infant king, and whoever had the person of the king (much more than whoever had the Great State Seal) had the power.

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to the assumption that in Athaliah's story, too, the report on wars and battles (the king fighting the chaos) was followed by a report on palace and/or temple construction (the king creating cosmos).

[92] B. Halpern, The Stela from Dan: Epigraphic and Historical Considerations: Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research 296 (1994) 63-80.

[93] Cf. Ps 45,16f. Does the Phoenician princess 45,12 indicate another literary import from the north? The king being addressed as "god" shows Near Eastern royal ideology to a larger extent than any Judaean text.

5. After Athaliah

Damascene-Aramaic Suzerainty in, at least, the last third of the 9th century does not seem to have left significant traces in the "Historia" with the exception of the concept of the "Syrian empire" from the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt (1 Kings 5,1), a territory which Hazael was the first to constitute as a political unity. Dependency on Damascus was, otherwise, in all probability not much of a problem for the court of Jerusalem, for the "Historia" contained, by that time, already enough ups and downs to cope with this situation.

With the reconstitution of Israel under Joash and especially Jeroboam II (following the Assyrian move against Damascus[94], powerful enough to oust Damascus for a while as an international player but not yet powerful enough to make the regions south and southwest of Damascus feel and fear the Assyrian supremacy), Judah inevitably drifted into Israelite dependency again (only to be lifted when Assyria from 738 onwards took the Israelite pressure off Judah[95]). This is why and how the foundation Legend of the Nimside dynasty (2 Kings 9f) also found its way into the "Historia".

In 2 Kings 9f, any hint at Jehu's Aramaic connection is carefully deleted – he acted on Jhwh's behalf, and Jhwh's alone. The scheme of "previous repression[96] – present salvation" is enacted once again, first by a series of Aramaean wars (historically deriving from the reigns of Jehoahaz and Hadaezer b. Hazael[97]) and secondly by celebrating the deliverance by the establishment of a state cult with the exodus-myth as its cultic legend. In all likelihood, the "sin" of Jeroboam I was actually committed by Jeroboam II[98].

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[94] M. Weippert, Die Feldzüge Adadnararis III. nach Syrien. Voraussetzungen, Verlauf, Folgen: Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina Vereins 108 (1992) 42-67.

[95] Demographically, Menahem's tribute 2 Kings 15,19f (presupposing a population of 72,000 landowning males, or 500,000 souls at least) must have included Judah too, at least. 1 Kings 8,65; 9,15 reflect the achievements of Jeroboam II.

[96] If the god of Jeroboam's story was a responsible one, a divine hint that Jehu had, perhaps, shed a tiny little bit of too much blood in order to be rewarded with immediate empire should have been sufficient. Cf. Hosea 1,4f

[97] And later shifted to the Omrides (after the Omrides had lost their glory to Solomon) by authors/redactors who despised the "sin of Jeroboam" even more than the Omrides of which they could not know very much anymore anyway; cf. J.M. Miller, The Elisha Cycle and the Accounts of the Omride Wars: Journal of Biblical Literature 85 (1966) 441-454; Helga Weippert, Ahab el campeador? Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu 1 Könige 22: Biblica 69 (1988) 457-479.

[98] Whether Jeroboam I had any foothold at all at Dan and Bethel is doubtful (see *supra*, § 3.2; 3.4; n. 71), the Omrides position at Dan was a precarious one and rather short lived and, in addition, they were blatantly and publicly Egyptianizing which would have rendered any official reference to the exodus sort of hollow, at the same time enhancing the ideological value of the tradition for their Nimside enemies and successors.

With this final note incorporating the exodus tradition, the "Historia" as a piece of oral literature (or, as stated above, literature behaving in the transmission process as if it were oral) probably came to an end. Concomitant with the decline of Israel in the second half of the 8th century Judah acquired full statehood. Now it was the scribes' turn to take care of ideology. It is, however, not without foreboding that the story of Beth-David ends with a reference to the tradition which was finally going to replace it as the "foundation myth" of biblical Israel.

6. Conclusions

The experimental reading of the Beth-David story through the eyes of three of its most prominent queens is at its end. The development of the tradition, as it has unfolded itself, may be summarized by the following table:

Bathsheba	Maacah	Athaliah	Jeroboam II
2 Samuel 11f 1 Kings 1f	2 Samuel 13-20 1 Kings 3 1 Kings 11f	1 Samuel 9-11.13-14.17... 27.29-30; 2 Samuel 1-5.8; 2 Samuel 21 [<-1 Kings 4.6] 1 Kings 15	[1 Kings. 9,15-17] <- 1 Kings 12 1 Kings 20.22 2 Kings 9f 2 Kings 11

Once again the biblical story of Solomon has turned out to be a conglomerate to which many centuries have added – including Solomon's own[99].

One may or may not accept the present reconstruction of the first stages of the "Historia of Early Kings" as historically probable; whether one does or not should depend on the subset of the universe of historical data in which a person moves. Even if this reconstruction is regarded as probably historically correct, it is imperative to keep in mind that it does not reconstruct more than three early representations, or perceptions, of David and his immediate successors, not their historical reality itself.

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[99] Cf. Donner, Geschichte, I, 242f; Knauf, Copper Supply. The "book of the annals of Solomon" 1 Kings 11,41 seems to be wholly fictitious, a makeshift camouflage for the absence of Solomon from

As much as the presentation has sometimes, and perhaps inevitably, personalized the three queens as "authors" it is as imperative to keep in mind that they were at least to the same degree exponents of the clans and cliques which they represented: Bathsheba, the Jerusalem camarilla; Maacah, the Judaean rural nobility (the *'am ha-aretz*); Athaliah, the Omride politics of Israel-Judah united.

Beyond the historical questions involved, the present author had a meaningful reading experience in perceiving the story as if narrated by Bathsheba, Maacah and Athaliah. Perspectives, nuances, accents and hidden meanings surfaced, as well as intertextual connections, which are now largely hidden by and within the mega-narrative of the 7th century scribes and their deuteronomistic successors, and even more so by a scholarly and exegetical tradition fascinated to an unhealthy degree by the appurtenances and delusions of power, might and glory. Whether we actually hear the voices of Bathsheba, Maacah and Athaliah, this author does not know. But there are voices in the story which the One-God's-Chosen-King centered redaction tried to silence in vain.

Euro-American white male biblical scholars have in the past – and to a disturbing degree still in the present – read the story of the early kings through the eyes of the deuteronomists, all too often sympathizing or even identifying with their abysmal ideology[100]. For the benefit of the living and the life of future generations, both in Europe, the US and the Near East, it is high time to regard this story with other eyes.

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the Israelite and Judaean annals which served as source for the rest of Kings (thus already presupposing the division of Samuel and Kings!).

[100] Which the present author holds responsible for the wars of 601-597, 588-586, 66-73/74 and 132-135/6 (and some more) with all their dead. As the history of the Synagogue after the Bar-Kochba-delusion shows, Judaism can do very well without deuteronomism, and Christianity should be able of the same. Cf. also Gideon Samet, The hidden threat of the outposts: Ha'aretz Oct. 23, 2002: "Israel, according to Eitam, is not just a pragmatic entity whose goal is to worry about the welfare of its residents. Its raison d'etre [sic], from the Jordan to the sea, is 'to reveal the image of God in the world ... to be the Noah's ark of the future … to reveal God's working in history,' and other idiocies that compete with the most degenerate texts from the height of German and Italian romanticism"; and Yossi Sarid, Before Jewish fascism takes over: Ha'aretz Oct 28, 2002: "Our current zealots also are leading to an anarchy that endangers our Third Commonwealth … Are there those among us who hate the zealots for this? In some cases there are, but it is not 'baseless hatred'. The hatred derives from the profound worry that history will repeat itself and we can expect the same bitter fate of the Second Commonwealth because a few thousand Sicarii once again decided to take our fate into their hands".

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