

West Semitic Texts and the Book of Joshua

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Archaeologists often examine the book of Joshua in the light of questions that it raises concerning its context in the material culture. This essay proposes to consider the context of the book in light of the ancient world of texts. Conquest accounts, boundary descriptions, treaties and other forms of texts are common to both the Hebrew book of Joshua and written documents of the West Semitic world. Archives of Alalakh, Ugarit and neighboring Egyptian and Anatolian sources are surveyed for their contribution to the understanding of texts found in Joshua. Specific items of vocabulary and onomastics, as well as larger forms of literature, are consulted with the goal of placing various portions of the book in their literary context as documents whose heritage lies in the West Semitic scribal tradition.

Key Words: Joshua, Ugarit, onomastics, geography, West Semitic

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to consider the contribution of other ancient Near Eastern literary sources for the purpose of understanding the original context of the book of Joshua. Often much is made of the archaeological issues in this book. Thus the question of material culture evidence for Jericho's fallen walls or Ai's pre-Israelite settlement dominate discussion of the first part of Joshua.¹ In the second half, historical geographers focus on issues regarding the identification of sites and the date of settlement patterns that might relate to the detailed town lists of Joshua 15, 21 and elsewhere.² Although these are

1. On these issues see R. S. Hess, "Early Israel in Canaan: A Survey of Recent Evidence and Interpretations," *PEQ* 126 (1993) 125-42.

2. Site identification and dating is a major issue. On the one hand it would appear that the absence of evidence for sites can aid in fixing dates when an area was settled and therefore when the town lists in Joshua were to be written. See, e.g., Z. Greenhut, "The City of Salt," *BARev* 19.4 (July/August 1993) 32-35, 38-43. On the other hand,

useful and important questions, placing sole emphasis upon them creates a danger that the important contribution of ancient Near Eastern texts to the study of the book of Joshua may pass by unnoticed. This essay will survey recent research in extrabiblical texts where it touches upon and illuminates the historical and cultural context of the book of Joshua.

Some recent studies of Joshua accept a date before the Monarchy for the composition of most or all of the book of Joshua.³ Others reflect attempts to date the whole Old Testament later, even in the Hellenistic period. An example of this may be found in a recent contribution by John Strange. He advocates a second century BC date for the book of Joshua.⁴ He argues this on the basis of the distribution of place names, the anti-Canaanite polemic, the presence of the priestly source, the fact that the book seems out of place in the narrative flow of Deuteronomy and Judges and the emphasis on Shechem. These circumstantial arguments are not decisive. The absence of town lists from the central hill country may reflect the fact that the Manasseh and Ephraim allotments are related to family histories and to the first phase of the settlement. The anti-Canaanite polemic is an argument for an earlier date. Canaanites do not appear after 1 Kgs 9:20-21 in the historical books of the Old Testament. The priestly source, if its existence is assumed, is not necessarily a Hasmonean document. There are good linguistic reasons for dating it before the Exile.⁵ The location of Joshua in its present context is not disruptive but fulfills the expected function of national histories that describe the conquest and occupation of the homeland.⁶ The emphasis on the region of

the evidence from New Kingdom Egyptian itineraries and other extra-biblical sources demonstrate examples where the archaeologists have failed to find a site in the Late Bronze Age and yet it was known to the scribes of that era and perhaps also to the biblical writers. See C. R. Krahmalkov, "Exodus Itinerary Confirmed by Egyptian Evidence," *BAR* 20.5 (September/October 1994) 60-61; "Fallacies in the Study of Early Israel: An Onomastic Perspective," *TynBul* 45 (1994) 339-54.

3. Holland Martin, *Das Buch Josua* (Wuppertaler Studienbibel, AT; Wuppertal/Zurich: Brockhaus, 1993); H. J. Koorevaar, *De Opbouw van het Boek Jozua* (Heverlee: Centrum voor Bijbelse Vorming België, 1990).

4. J. Strange, "The Book of Joshua: A Hasmonean Manifesto," *History and Tradition of Early Israel: Studies Presented to Eduard Nielsen* (ed. A. Lemaire and B. Otzen; VTSup 50; Leiden: Brill, 1993) 136-41.

5. See Y Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel from Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (trans. M. Greenberg; New York: Schocken, 1972); A. Hurvitz, "Dating the Priestly Source in Light of the Historical Study of Biblical Hebrew a Century after Wellhausen," *ZAW* 100 (Supplement 1988) 88-100.

6. See M. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites* (The Taubman Lectures in Jewish Studies; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 22-51.

Shechem for the covenant is also found in Deuteronomy 27. Its strategic significance as the initial capital of the Northern Kingdom and its role in the Amarna letters of the fourteenth century BC attest to an early political and literary prominence for the site.⁷

What then are the origins of the book of Joshua? The many theories of redaction, often ascribed to a Deuteronomist, allow for a variety of editions in the development of the book. However, the nature of such evidence tends to be speculative. As with many books in the Old Testament, there is little evidence that allows the modern scholar to accurately date the book or the various narratives and other texts in it. However, a study of the text of Joshua reveals a variety of forms of evidence that suggest a positive correlation between Joshua and other texts of the West Semitic world. The procedure followed here will be to survey recent discussion regarding the relationship of Joshua and ancient Near Eastern texts and to evaluate their results in the light of the primary sources. This evidence includes the study of individual lexical elements such as personal, place, and people group names. It also involves a consideration of literary forms in the text, including ones that resemble treaties, territorial descriptions, and administrative texts.

The study cannot establish or disprove historicity because the evidence necessary to discuss questions of history is not present, i.e., the existence of extrabiblical witnesses to the events described in Joshua. However, elements of antiquity can be identified in the biblical book and in comparative literature. This evidence will suggest that items in the book of Joshua resemble texts from the West Semitic world of the second millennium BC. In some cases the comparisons cannot otherwise be explained than by dating the evidence to the latter part of the second millennium BC, either the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 BC) or the Iron Age I (1200-1000 BC). This was the era of the Egyptian New Kingdom to the south, the Hittite empire in Anatolia and the Hurrian presence in northern Syria. In particular, the Hittite and Hurrian evidence provides substantial links with the second millennium because existing evidence of these cultures and of certain aspects of their linguistic influence disappears after the tenth century BC. This essay will examine recent studies of this material with a goal to understand better the cultural and literary contexts in which texts of Joshua were written.

7. See 1 Kgs 12:25; R. S. Hess, "Smitten Ant Bites Back: Rhetorical Forms in the Amarna Correspondence from Shechem," *Verse in Ancient Near Eastern Prose* (ed. J. C. de Moor and W. G. E. Watson; AOAT 42; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993) 95-111; idem, "Shechem," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

II. RECENT DISCUSSIONS OF THE EVIDENCE

The question of the original context of the Joshua texts has been present for a long time.

1. Hoffmeier, Van Seters and especially Younger have all examined the form and structure of the conquest narratives of Joshua and found them to resemble ancient Near Eastern conquest accounts from a variety of periods.⁸ Van Seters has argued that the warfare accounts of Joshua 1-12 resemble those of the Neo-Assyrian texts from the first millennium BC. Hoffmeier has suggested that an equally strong case can be made for a resemblance to the Egyptian conquest accounts of Ramses II from the thirteenth century BC. Younger has provided the most complete examination of all the annals and conquest accounts from the ancient Near East. He argues for similarities on a wide variety of levels and concludes that the structure of the texts themselves cannot be used to date the texts with precision.

2. Weinfeld, Liverani and others have identified textual sources from the second millennium BC cultures of the Babylonians, Hittites and Hurrians that bear similarities to various descriptions of Joshua 2-7.

a. M. Weinfeld argues for the historicity of Joshua 2. In particular he uses the West Semitic legal collection of Hammurabi and the Mari texts, both dating from the first half of the second millennium BC. The Hittite instruction to the chief of the border guards, dating from the Late Bronze Age, is also used. Weinfeld writes:⁹

Sending out men for reconnaissance was a widespread phenomenon in the east. Moreover, a prostitute's or innkeeper's house was the accustomed place for meeting with spies, conspirators, and the like. Thus, for example, we read in Hammurabi Code: "If scoundrels plot together [in conspiratorial relationships] in an innkeeper's house, and she does not seize them and bring them to the palace, that innkeeper shall be put to death" (law §109). In a Mari letter we read about two men who sow fear and panic and cause rebellion in an army. Also, the pattern of a three-day stay in an area when pursuing escapees has support in ancient eastern sources; for example the instructions to the Hittite tower commanders specify that if an enemy invades a place he must be pur-

8. J. K. Hoffmeier, "The Structure of Joshua 1-11 and the Annals of Thutmose III," *Faith, Tradition, History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context* (ed. A. R. Millard, J. K. Hoffmeier and D. W. Baker; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994) 165-79; J. Van Seters, "Joshua's Campaign of Canaan and Near Eastern Historiography," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 2 (1990) 1-12; K. L. Younger, Jr., *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing* (JSOTSup 98; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990).

9. M. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites*, 142-43. On the laws of Hammurabi, see also P. Hieronymus Horn, "Josua 2, 1-24 im Milieu einer 'dimorphic society'," *BZ* 31 (1987) 264-70.

sued for three days. In the same collection of instructions we find that it is forbidden to build an inn (*arzana*) in which prostitutes live near the fortress wall, apparently because of the kind of danger described in Joshua 2.

b. Josh 3:10 lists the groups of people whom God will drive out before Israel. Among these are three groups that have a distinctive association with the second millennium BC: the Hivites, the Perizzites and the Girgashites. Speiser associated the Hivites with Hurrian peoples who were among city leaders in Palestine in the fourteenth century and whose legacy remained to the time of David.¹⁰ In Josh 9:7 and 11:19 the Hivites are identified with the Gibeonites.¹¹

A similar origin may exist for the Perizzites.¹² Although Gorg identifies the term with the land of *pi-ri-in-du* in Cilicia,¹³ others attempt a sociological definition, as people who dwell in unwalled villages and in the highland countryside.¹⁴ However, the term is attested in the personal name, *pi-ri-iz-zi*, from fourteenth century BC Mitanni, the Hurrian kingdom from northern Syria. The preservation of the characteristic Hurrian *-zzi* suffix in 'Perizzite' may support this identification.¹⁵ Thus the name and presumably at least some of the people associated with it have a northern origin, however much the name becomes associated with 'foreigners' in general.

Hurrian peoples and names are found in the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 BC). Their presence diminished in the following two centuries and disappeared altogether at the beginning of the first millennium BC. The name of the Girgashites occurs in second millennium BC.

10. This identification rests upon the interchange of Horite and Hivite in Gen 36:2, 20 and the LXX rendering of Hivite in Gen 36:2 and Josh 9:7. See E. A. Speiser, "Hurrians," *IDB* 2.665; H. A. Hoffner, "Hittites and Hurrians," *People of Old Testament Times* (ed. D. J. Wiseman; Oxford: Clarendon) 225. R. de Vaux ("Les Hurrites de l'histoire et les Horites de la Bible," *RB* 74 [1967] 497-503) denied this relationship. However, the presence of Hurrian name bearers in nearby Jerusalem in the fourteenth century BC supports the equation. The attempt of O. Margalith ("The Hivites," *ZAW* 100 [1988] 60-70) to identify them with the Ahhiyawa of Western Anatolia requires even greater linguistic shifts and finds little evidence in the hill country to support it.

11. A possible association has been observed with the place name, Kue in Anatolia (1 Kgs 11:28). See W. F. Albright, "Cilicia and Babylonia under the Chaldean Kings," *BASOR* 120 (1950) 22-24.

12. Albright (*ibid.*, 25), identifies it with the land of *pi-ri-in-du* in Cilicia.

13. M. Görg, "Hiwwiter im 13. Jahrhundert v. Chr.," *UF* 8 (1976) 53-55.

14. See R. F. Schnell, "Perizzite," *IDB* 3.735.

15. For further discussion, see B. Mazar, "The Early Israelite Settlement in the Hill Country," *BASOR* 241 (1981) 75-85; reprinted in B. Mazar, *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Essays* (ed. S. Ahituv and B. A. Levine; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986) 35-48; R. S. Hess, "Cultural Aspects of Onomastic Distribution in the Amarna Texts," *UF* 21 (1989) 209-16; N. Na'aman, "The Hurrians and the End of the Middle Bronze Age in Palestine," *Levant* 26 (1994) 175-87. Na'aman's views about the collapse of the Middle Bronze Age civilization as due to Hurrian migration remains highly speculative and should be treated with caution.

Ugaritic and Egyptian sources.¹⁶ At Ugarit a name, *grgš*, occurs. Its origin is not known. However, its association with the Hivites and Perizzites suggests that they all migrated south from the Hittite empire and perhaps earlier, from the Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni. Many peoples in addition to Israelites experienced migration during the latter half of the second millennium BC.

c. Josh 6:20 records how God brought down the walls of Jericho. In a Hittite text from the second half of the second millennium BC, the Hittite deity, Shaushga, performs a similar act:

Shaushga of Shamuha, my lady, revealed also then her divine justice: in the very moment I reached him, the wooden fortifications fell down to the length of one *gipeššar*.¹⁷

Thus the sort of miracles attributed to God in the book of Joshua were also expected of other deities in the Late Bronze Age world.

3. In Joshua there occur two sets of boundary descriptions as well as town lists.

a. The first is the boundary of the whole of the Promised Land. Josh 1:4 records the promise, "Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west" (NIV). N. P. Lemche has recently argued that this description reflects a late perception of an idealized land.¹⁸ He suggests that there is no relationship between this description of Canaan and the Egyptian New Kingdom understanding of the land of Canaan (*kinahhi*) from the second millennium BC. The descriptions of the borders of the Promised Land of Canaan in the Pentateuch and in Josh 1:4 match the Egyptian understanding of Canaan in second millennium BC sources. Although no Egyptian source provides a boundary description of Canaan, texts from the fourteenth until the twelfth centuries mention the cities of Byblos, Tyre, Sidon, Acco, and Hazor as part of the land of Canaan.¹⁹ The relevant sources are found in the thirteenth century BC satirical letter Papyrus Anastasi I and in the fourteenth century BC Amarna letters, especially EA 148 and EA 151 from the leader of Tyre, but

16. M. Görg, "Hiwwiter im 13. Jahrhundert v. Chr."

17. So M. Liverani, *Prestige and Interest: International Relations in the Near East ca. 1600-1100 B.C.* (History of the Ancient Near East/Studies 1; Padova: Sargon, 1990) 155. The Hittite text is *Keilschrifturkunde aus Boghazkoy*, vol. 6, II 29-33.

18. N. P. Lemche, *The Canaanites and Their Land* (JSOTSup 110; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991) 25-52.

19. See Mazar, *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Essays*, 192-93; Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (rev. and trans. A. F. Rainey; Westminster: Philadelphia, 1979) 69.

including at least nine other letters from Byblos, Babylon, Alashia, and Amurru.²⁰

The attempt of Lemche to dispute the occurrence of the same description of Canaan in both the Egyptian sources and Joshua depends on his alternative interpretation of a passage in EA 151, which he takes to mean that Egypt understood Cilician Danuna to be part of Canaan. In this text the pharaoh asks the king of Tyre what news he hears from Canaan. The Tyrian king then describes events from Danuna, located in the southern region of modern day Turkey, outside the northern borders of the biblical description of Canaan. Lemche argues that this means that the kings of Tyre and of Egypt understood Canaan to include Danuna and that this proves that Egypt's understanding of Canaan in the second millennium BC was different unrelated to the biblical account from the Pentateuch and Joshua. However, as A. F. Rainey has shown, the Amarna letters should not be interpreted to mean that the pharaoh was asking for news from Canaan but that the pharaoh was asking the king of Tyre, who himself was from Canaan, for any news that he had.²¹ Thus Danuna was not part of Canaan but close enough that the king of Tyre heard news about it. All the other second millennium BC sources describe Canaan within the boundaries used in the biblical texts. In fact, the northern boundary of Canaan never was clear because the Egyptians, who saw Canaan as part of their empire, were in conflict with the Hittites on the northern border of the land. The Mediterranean Sea formed the western border of Canaan and the Jordan River formed the eastern border (though north of the Sea of Galilee the region included areas farther east). The biblical concept of the Promised Land in Joshua agrees with the Egyptian usage of Canaan during their New Kingdom empire. The use of the term, "Canaan," by Egypt is limited to the second millennium BC.²²

b. Chapters 13-21 of Joshua describe the land that was allotted to each of the tribes of Israel. As Alt long ago recognized, these allotments are made up of both boundary descriptions and town lists. The boundary descriptions define tribal allotments using towns and geographical features that mark the division between two adjacent tribes. They are mixed together with town lists in Joshua 13-19. Z. Kallai and

20. See R. Hess, *Amarna Proper Names* (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew Union College, 1984) 460; E. Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 106-9; Lemche, *The Canaanites and Their Land*, 25-52; and my review of Lemche in *Themelios* 18.2 (January 1993) 24.

21. See A. F. Rainey, "Ugarit and the Canaanites Again," *IEJ* 14 (1964) 101.

22. See further, N. Na'aman, "The Canaanites and Their Land: A Rejoinder," *UF* 26 (1994) 397-418. Na'aman's article makes no mention of Rainey's important analysis of the crucial passage of EA 151.

N. Na'aman have argued that these boundary descriptions should be dated to the United Monarchy.²³ Kallai argues that this is the only time when the territory of Israel reached the extent of the tribal boundaries described in Joshua. Na'aman argues that, until the time of the monarchy of David, the boundary lists served no purpose. During David's reign they helped to legitimate his monarchy.

From an ancient Near Eastern context, those boundary descriptions closest to the tribal boundaries in Joshua 13-21 are found in the treaty documents from Ugarit and from the Hittite capital (Hattusas) in the Late Bronze Age.²⁴ These texts demarcate the northern and southern boundaries of the kingdom of Ugarit. Three types of similarities occur: the form of the descriptions, the parties involved and the purpose of these texts. On a formal level, all these boundary descriptions possess three items: (1) an introduction and a conclusion indicating the land or lands on behalf of which the boundary is concerned; (2) brief narrative notes that intersperse the boundary descriptions; and (3) in the case of duplicate descriptions of the same boundary, slight variations in the spellings, sequence, and selection of the place names as well as in the appearance of prepositions and notes that occur between the place names.²⁵ A second area of similarity has to do with the parties involved with fixing the boundary. As in the case of the Israelite tribes, and in the case of the boundary descriptions from Ugarit and Hattusas, the parties involved and present at the point of decision represent the lands on both sides of the boundary. The third area of comparison addresses the purpose of the descriptions. In the ancient Near Eastern texts, their context within a treaty suggests that they served to define a legal relationship between the political groups involved. In the case of the biblical text, God establishes a covenant with Israel and uses the boundary descriptions to define the fulfilment of promises made to the nation's

23. Z. Kallai, *Historical Geography of the Bible: The Tribal Territories of Israel* (Jerusalem/Leiden: Magnes/Brill, 1986) 277-325. See also his "Tribes, Territories of," *IDBSup*, 920-23; "The United Monarchy of Israel: A Focal Point in Israelite Historiography," *IEJ* 27 (1977) 103-9; N. Na'aman, *Borders and Districts in Biblical Historiography* (Jerusalem Biblical Studies 4; Jerusalem: Simor, 1986) especially 75-117.

24. Parts of this section have been adapted from R. S. Hess, *Joshua* (Tyndale Commentary on the Old Testament; Leicester: IVP, 1996) 53-60; idem, "Asking Historical Questions of Joshua 13-19: Recent Discussion concerning the Date of the Boundary Lists," *Faith, Tradition, History*, 191-205; idem, "Late Bronze Age and Biblical Boundary Descriptions of the West Semitic World," *Ugarit and the Bible: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Ugarit and the Bible—Manchester, September 1992* (ed. G. Brooke, A. Curtis, and J. Healey; Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur Band 11; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994) 123-38.

25. For the latter point, see M. E. J. Richardson, "Hebrew Toponyms," *TynBul* 20 (1969) 97-98.

ancestors in the context of formal covenant ceremonies that occur before (8:30-35) and after (chap. 24) the allotment. A similar cultural context and perhaps also a similar date should be applied to the origin of the boundary descriptions in Joshua 13-21.

c. Both Kallai and Na'aman would date the town lists, that also occur in chapters 13-21, to the first millennium BC. They argue this on the basis of the appearance of many more settlements in this period than in the earlier times. These settlements could then be identified with the many towns named in Joshua. However, the second type of territory description in Joshua 13-21, the town lists, also occur outside the Bible, although in a slightly different form. There is evidence of lists of towns in Late Bronze Age cuneiform cultures from sites such as Ugarit and Alalakh.²⁶ These cuneiform lists originate as part of census requirements in the city-states. They always occur as part of a list of people or objects, with the town names specifying their origin or destination. The town lists normally include an introduction, describing the significance of the items or persons listed, and a summary, again describing the list and sometimes providing a total number of persons or objects. These administrative lists can be long and complex. In such cases, the text is divided into subgroups, each with its own introduction and summary.²⁷ In Joshua, many of the Southern town lists, the Northern town lists, and the Levitical town list resemble these administrative lists.²⁸ They often have their own introductions and summaries that indicate the total number of towns. Some of the longer lists, such as the town list of Judah in chap. 15 and the list of Levite towns in chap. 21, are subdivided, just like the administrative lists. This may suggest their origin as administrative documents, keeping a record of the tribal allotments. However, unlike the town lists of Ugarit and Alalakh, the Joshua lists (1) are separated from any reference to persons or objects associated with the town, (2) contain glosses that tie them to narratives in Joshua, and (3) have been fully integrated into the land grant of Joshua 13-21 and the larger covenant context (Josh 8:30-35; 24) that defines the whole land as God's gift to this people.

26. R. S. Hess, "A Typology of West Semitic Place Name Lists with Special Reference to Joshua 13-21," *BA* 59 (1996) 160-70.

27. See the example of Late Bronze Age Alalakh text 457, in D. J. Wiseman and R. S. Hess, "Alalakh Text 457," *UF* 26 (1994) 501-8.

28. The town lists for Benjamin (18:21-28), Dan (19:41-46), Judah (15:21-62), Simeon (19:2-7), Issachar (19:18-21), Naphtali (19:35-38) and the Levitical list (Joshua 21) share the characteristics of administrative lists. The central town lists of Manasseh (13:31; 17:2-3, 11) have a different form. The towns of Asylum (20:7-8) and other small lists are so well integrated into their narrative context that they have no introductions and summaries, and so they do not resemble administrative lists.

Thus these texts have the appearance of administrative lists, contra Na'aman, who sees them as ideological creations of a later age. Whatever their origin, their present integration into the covenant context of Joshua argues that they came to serve a theological purpose, bearing witness to the intent of Israel's God to grant the people the whole land that they could occupy in a thorough and organized fashion. Thus they would bear witness to the faithfulness of their covenantal God. The detailed nature of the texts suggests that they could continue to be used for juridical and administrative purposes. Indeed, it is likely that they were so used until the conquest and deportation of the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

d. An additional type of town list occurs in Joshua, that of towns conquered by military force. There is the account of the southern campaign in Josh 10:28-42, where conquest descriptions are repeated for each town. Younger has likened this to conquest annals that are found in the archives of many of the major powers in the ancient Near East.²⁹ Joshua 12 also contains a list of place names as a summary of towns conquered by Israel. Each name is preceded by the word for "king of" (*melek*) and followed by the number, "one" (*'ehād*). In its repeated form, "king of GN, one," this text looks like administrative lists where the place names form one element of a repeated sequence on each line. However, as a list of place names conquered which are personified by their leader, this text also resembles the lists of Canaanite and other towns conquered by Egyptian pharaohs. The lists occur in a form in which the hieroglyph of each town is portrayed in a cartouche which itself forms part of the figure of a bound captive. Thus each town is personified as a captive with his hands tied behind his back, just as in Joshua each town is personified by mention of its defeated leader. The Egyptian lists date from as early as the fifteenth century to as late as the tenth century BC.³⁰

4. If Lemche believes that the use of the term "Canaanite" is an attempt to give a fictitious document an appearance of historicity by using an archaic term, James Barr argues a similar conclusion for the name of Debir king of Eglon in Josh 10:3.³¹ He suggests that there is no evidence for the personal name, Debir, but only for a town by that name. The author of Joshua 10 felt free to make up names and to use

29. K. L. Younger, Jr., *Ancient Conquest Accounts*, 226-28.

30. They include lists from the reigns of Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV, Amenhotep III, Horemhab, Seti I, Ramses II, Ramses III, and Sheshonq I, as found in *ANET*, 253-64.

31. J. Barr, "Mythical Monarch Unmasked? Mysterious Doings of Debir King of Eglon," *JSOT* 48 (1990) 55-68.

place names as personal names. In fact, the West Semitic root, *dbr*, may occur in the name of the famous judge, Deborah, where it probably means "a bee." A homonymic root meaning "to lead" has been found in a West Semitic name from an Egyptian New Kingdom text, *n-ty-b'-rty-*. Therefore, the contention mentioned above, that Debir cannot be a personal name, contradicts the evidence. The root of Debir does occur in West Semitic personal names from the late second millennium BC.

Proper names are unique in a text. Although they form a natural part of many types of texts, they do not share in many of the grammatical and syntactical features of their surrounding environment. They are isolates that import features that can come from other peoples and languages. In Western civilization personal names can have their origins in a wide variety of cultures and people groups. The same was true in the ancient Near East. Names reflected different languages and the groups of people who spoke them. Unlike modern Western civilization, however, the choice of personal names often reflected the culture and society of which the name bearer was a part. Thus, Egyptians tended to bear Egyptian names. Hittites bore Hittite names. Hurrians bore Hurrian names. West Semites, including Israelites and some Canaanites, bore West Semitic names. In some cases certain elements within names became popular in one age and then went out of fashion and did not occur in names of later generations. In other cases, whole groups of people and their languages ceased to exist and the names that came from their societies ceased to appear. To a certain extent this occurs with the Hittites. Neo-Hittite states of the first millennium continued to preserve certain specifics of their culture, however. It is especially the case with the Hurrians, whose names disappear after the tenth century BC. The Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni had wide cultural influence as seen in the many Hurrian names from Nuzi, a town to the east, and among names of the rulers of Palestine to the west. Mitanni flourished in the fifteenth century and was destroyed in the fourteenth. Hurrian culture and names remained in the ancient Near East for a few more centuries but disappeared altogether after the tenth century BC. Therefore, the presence of Hurrian names is an indication of a second millennium BC source. The following names from Joshua provide examples of this sort of phenomenon. They are names of non-Israelite people.³² This includes the names of Rahab and of town leaders from Jerusalem (Adonizedeck), Lachish (Japhia), Hazor (Jabin), Gezer (Horam) and possibly Madon (Jobab). These all have West Semitic names, concerning which

32. For a more complete study of all these names, with full bibliography, see R. S. Hess, "Non-Israelite Personal Names in the Book of Joshua," *CBQ* 58 (1996) 205-14.

the elements making up the names are attested in other personal names among West Semites of the second millennium BC. Other names are composed of Hurrian or northern elements: Piram of Jarmuth and Hoham, Shehai, and Talmai who are all associated with Hebron.

Along with their "brother," Ahiman, who has a West Semitic name, Sheshai and Talmai are called the sons of Anak in Joshua and the Pentateuch. Both Hurrian and West Semitic names are found in the Amarna letters from Jerusalem and areas nearby Hebron. They also occur on the cuneiform tablet discovered in 1985 at Tell er-Rumeidah, the site of ancient Hebron. On this tablet were found both West Semitic and Hurrian names among those involved in sacrifices at Hebron. More importantly, the presence of Hurrian names in these texts from Joshua testifies to their antiquity. As already noted, these names do not occur after the tenth century BC. Therefore, their second millennium BC origin is suggested on the basis of current onomastic evidence.

5. Hazor is given special prominence in the account of Israel's northern campaign in Josh 11:10 where it is described as "formerly at the head of all these kingdoms." Archaeologically, Hazor is identified with Tell el Qedah, one of the largest Bronze Age tells in Palestine, with strong fortifications throughout this period.³³ The prominence of Hazor is also attested in the second millennium BC written records from Pella, Tyre, Egypt, Mari and Hazor itself.³⁴ If the Mari texts do mention this site, it was a trading center in the eighteenth century BC and perhaps the only Palestinian site named in those records. In the Amarna Age it is one of the few Syro-Palestinian members of the Egyptian empire whose ruler uses the title, "king" (LUGAL). Thus Hazor of the period before Israel's appearance was the most prominent city of all those that Israel warred against in Joshua 11.

6. Josh 24:2-27 forms a report of a covenant that, in its form and content, resembles the Hittite vassal treaty structure. An aspect such as its historical prologue of vv. 2-13 is unique to treaties of the second millennium BC. The details of this have been argued more thor-

33. See the discussion of Joshua 11 in R. S. Hess, *Joshua*, 212-14; G. Caessens, *A History of Northwest Palestine in the Middle Bronze II-Late Bronze I Period*, 288; Y. Yadin, *Hazor: The Head of All Those Kingdoms* (The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 1970; London: Oxford University Press, 1972) 13-17; idem, "Biblical Archaeology Today: The Archaeological Aspect," *Biblical Archaeology Today: Proceedings of the International Congress on Biblical Archaeology Jerusalem, April 1984* (ed. J. Amitai et al.; Jerusalem: IES, 1985) 21-27.

34. See W. S. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 235, 288-90, 362; Y. Yadin, *Hazor: The Head of All Those Kingdoms*, 1-9. Mari is discussed by A. Malamat, *Mari and the Early Israelite Experience* (The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 1984; London: Oxford University Press, 1989) 56-68; contrast M. C. Astour, "The Location of Hasurā of the Mari Texts," *Maarav* 7 (1991) 51-65.

oughly than is possible here.³⁵ While it is true that the Hittite vassal treaty structure may have been the dominant treaty form of the Late Bronze Age and that the accidents of archaeological discovery have prevented the recovery of these treaties elsewhere, it is perhaps significant that the Hittite culture does preserve these texts that appear to have had some influence on early Israel and its culture. This northern influence of Hittite and Hurrian culture, already seen in the personal names, will be observed in greater detail in more of the following evidence.

This survey of recent discussion of the evidence for a historical context results in a variety of possibilities regarding the question of the date of Joshua's sources. The overall structure of the first half of the book of Joshua leads to indecisive results. The boundary descriptions and town lists of the second half of the book suggest a first millennium BC date from the perspective of some scholars. However, some specific details of Joshua 2, 6 and 24 appear to have parallels only in the second millennium BC. Meanwhile, other scholars regard information, such as the names of figures mentioned in the texts, as fictitious and without historical value to these documents.

7. A final area of evidence considers lexical items other than proper names. In Joshua 7, Achan is identified as responsible for the defeat at Ai. This occurred because he took some items that did not belong to him during the sack of Jericho. In 7:21, Achan confesses his crime with a detailed list of the items that he had stolen:

Josh 7:21, "When I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, then I coveted them, and took them; and behold, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath." (RSV)

וְאֶרְאָהּ [וְ] [אֶרְאָה] בְּשָׁלַל אֲדָרֶת
שְׁנַעַר אֶחָת טוֹבָה וּמְאֹתַיִם שֶׁקֶלִים
כֶּסֶף וְלִשׁוֹן זָהָב אֶחָד חֲמִשִּׁים
שֶׁקֶלִים מִשְׁקָלוֹ וְאֶחָדָם
וְהֵנָּם טְמוּנִים בְּאֶרֶץ בְּתוֹךְ הָאֹהֶלִי
וְאֶקְחֵם וְהִכְסֵּי תַּחְתֵּיהֶּ

These types of items appear on inventory lists from Ugarit and elsewhere in the second half of the second millennium BC. Millard has studied the Shinar robe. In the Hebrew text this item is written with the words in the following order: robe–Shinar–one–beautiful.³⁶ In a

35. See, e.g., K. A. Kitchen, "The Rise and Fall of Covenant, Law, and Treaty," *TynBul* 40 (1989) 118-35.

36. A. R. Millard, "Back to the Iron Bed: Og's or Procrustes?," *Congress Volume Paris 1992* (ed. J. A. Emerton; VTSup 61; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 197-200. The specific text is KTU 4.132 (RS 15.04), line 4.

similar manner at Ugarit, mention of a cloth from Tyre is followed by a description of the type of wool on the garment. Such descriptions, with the quality of the cloth following the name of the cloth, are common at Ugarit.³⁷ Other aspects of this inventory also focus attention on the fourteenth to twelfth centuries BC. This includes the use of Shinar to designate Babylon. Outside the Bible this term occurs as Shanhar. It appears only in the sixteenth to thirteenth centuries BC as the designation for Babylon.³⁸ It does not occur in the first millennium BC.

The RSV designation of the gold uses the term "bar" which is a translation of the word for "tongue." The reference to a "tongue of gold" occurs only here in the Bible. It also appears in a fourteenth century BC list of items sent from the Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni to the pharaoh of Egypt.³⁹ In fact, *The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* lists seven examples of the usage of *lišānu* as 'ingot.'⁴⁰ Four of the seven examples are from the second millennium BC (Late Bronze Age). The term Shinar and the description of a "tongue of gold" focus the date of this text in the second millennium BC.

III. CONCLUSION

Where they can be recognized in comparative ancient Near Eastern texts, individual names and objects and territory descriptions attest to a second millennium BC date. In many cases, such as the non-Israelite Hurrian names, there would be no reason to preserve these names and edit them into a later text. They are not famous or otherwise known. The simplest explanation remains that the texts that preserve these names also preserve a similar antiquity, dating from the late second millennium BC. With this evidence, the boundary descriptions and town lists from the second half of the book suggest that all of Joshua was intended as the application of a covenant document such as Deuteronomy or Joshua 24. The book of Joshua describes the acquisition of the land and expresses these blessings in detail in chapters 13-21 just as Deuteronomy had specified the obligations of the law in chapters 12-26. Both on levels of literary form and of individual lexical items, this document reflects an authentic West Semitic scribal tradition whose antiquity reaches back into the second millennium BC.

37. See *ktn.n^cm.m.*, "a linen cloth of good quality" (Ras Ibn Hani text, *Syria*, 56, 306). This and Millard's examples may be found in W. H. van Soldt, "Fabrics and Dyes at Ugarit," *UF* 22 (1990) 321-57, especially 331 and 337.

38. R. Zadok, "The Origin of the Name Shinar," *ZA* 74 (1984) 242.

39. EA 29, lines 34 and 39. See H.-R. Adler, *Das Akkadische des Königs Tušratta von Mitanni* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976) 234-35.

40. "Lišānu," CAD L. 215