



A Syro-Palestinian (?) City on a Ninth Century B. C. Assyrian Relief

Author(s): Pauline Albenda

Source: *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 206 (Apr., 1972), pp. 42-48

Published by: The American Schools of Oriental Research

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1356357>

Accessed: 11/09/2008 08:44

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=asor>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

campaigns are recorded, it is safe to assume that the stele was erected during the ninth campaign or very shortly thereafter.

At this point, it is necessary to return to the change in the name of the king of Tyre. This is an important piece of information, for it indicates that the list as preserved on the stele is not anachronistic. The tribute list recorded in 737 B. C. was current. Otherwise, the change of Hiram of Tyre to Tubail would be difficult to explain.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the data presented above. First, the list on the stele represents the ruling monarchs in Syria and Palestine in 737 B. C. Second, the close correspondence between the list on the stele and the one in the annals probably indicates that the two are not far removed from each other in time, and there is every likelihood that the list in the annals dates to 738 B. C. Third, it is no longer necessary to assume, as did Thiele, that the campaigns of 743-738 were conflated into a single account. The 737 list makes a date of 738 for the annals list more than likely.⁷ Finally, Menahem of Israel was still on the throne in the year 737 B. C., and any scheme of Biblical chronology must take this firm synchronism into account.

A SYRO-PALESTINIAN (?) CITY ON A NINTH CENTURY B. C. ASSYRIAN RELIEF

PAULINE ALBENDA

Some years ago, the ninth century B. C. Assyrian bas-relief B. M. 118906 (Fig. 1) was the subject of discussion by Jørgen Laessøe.¹ His main concern was with the unusual detail of a rope and pulley shown inside a walled city under attack by the Assyrian army of Ashurnasirpal II. The addition of a bucket attached to the rope under the pulley makes it apparent that what is illustrated here is a mechanical contrivance which served the purpose of raising water from a well, known as a *čerd*.² In his article Laessøe explored the several types of water systems known in antiquity, including the *sāqia* ³ and the *šādūf*,⁴ and concluded that the *čerd* seems to have been a relatively late invention and was not

⁷ On internal grounds, Tadmor has already shown that the annals are arranged chronologically by year. Thus, our datum serves only to confirm a conclusion already made. See H. Tadmor, "Introductory Remarks to a New Edition of the Annals of Tiglath-Pileser III," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, II/9, Jerusalem, 1967.

¹ "Reflexions on Modern and Ancient Oriental Water Works," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, 7 (1953), pp. 5-26.

² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³ For an extraordinary wall painting discovered in a burial chamber in Alexandria, of the Greco-Roman period, which illustrates the water-wheel drawn by oxen, see *Archaeology*, 17 (1964), cover and pp. 170-171.

⁴ This is operated by hand, as noted by Laessøe.

employed by the ancient Babylonians or Assyrians. He conjectured that it was invented in Egypt, although he admitted that this machine is not to be found in that country. However no attempt was undertaken to explain the unique representation of the mechanical contrivance

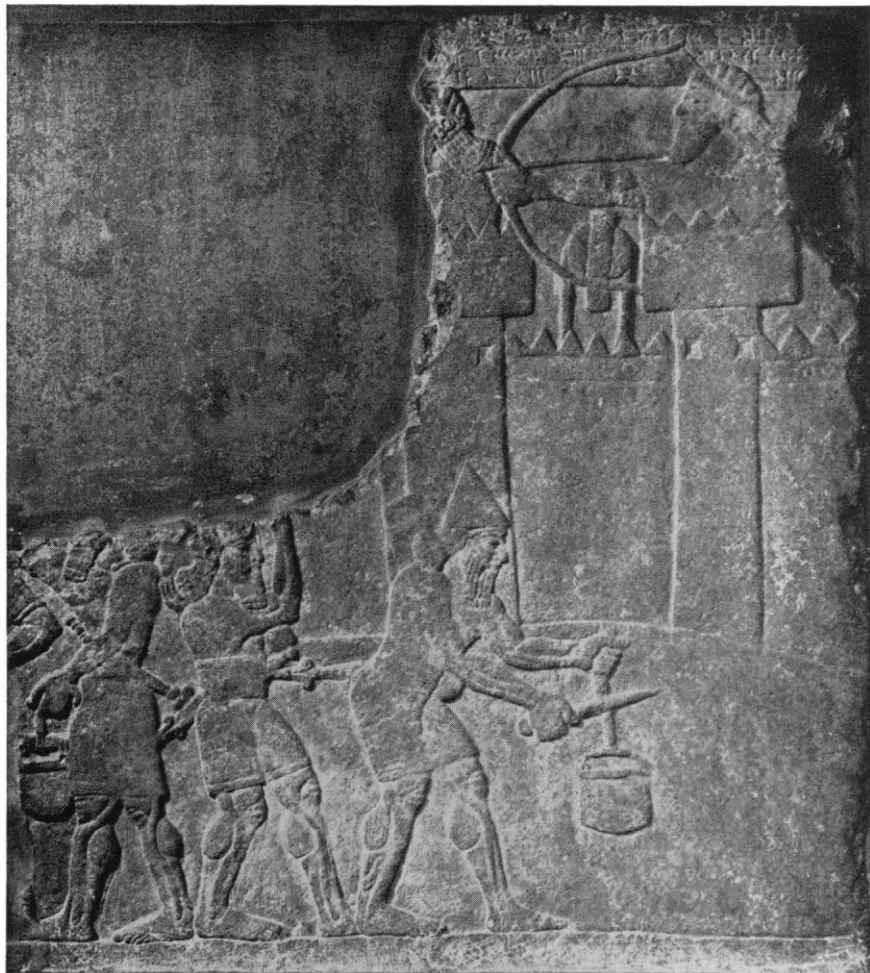


FIG. 1. Assyrian bas-relief B. M. 118906.
Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

on the Assyrian bas-relief, or the probable identity of the walled city. The present study will endeavor to provide solutions to these aspects.

The inclusion of the rope and pulley on the bas-relief was intended to convey a characteristic of the fortified city that distinguished it from other towns besieged by the Assyrian army, namely an unusual typo-

graphical feature which could be readily identifiable with a particular city or, more probably, specific region.⁵ The city is otherwise unidentified since the cuneiform inscription above the scene is part of the "standard inscription" of Ashurnasirpal II.⁶ The fortified city is shown on the existing bas-relief as standing upon a high, uneven mound sloping down toward the right. The relief sculpture, when originally discovered in its entirety (Fig. 2)—the extant portion belongs to the left central area—showed that the city wall included a high arched gate flanked on each side by a battlemented tower; farther along the right side of the wall appears another battlemented tower.⁷ The walls are solid, except for a pair of small recessed windows that pierce the upper section of the towers immediately below the battlements. The walls and towers have parapets consisting of simple triangular merlons. Below this is visible a band of round discs with a central boss that extends across the walls and battlements. Defenders appear atop the battlemented towers, facing to the left, as they discharge arrows from drawn bows. On either side of the besieged city, in a balanced grouping, stand an Assyrian archer, a shield bearer, and an armed attendant. From the right, a pair of kneeling archers advance partially up the mound toward the besieged town. A row of defeated townsmen are seen led away to the right of the scene while below the walled town, at the base of the mound, appear several Assyrian soldiers with booty and captives.

Inside the wall, between the towers, is represented the rope and pulley; below the baseline of the wall, extending towards the groundline of the bas-relief, is the rope to which is attached a large-handled bucket. An Assyrian soldier bends over as he cuts the rope in order to free the bucket;⁸ the bucket is seen again carried away as booty.

The illustration of the bucket attached to the rope and reaching far into the level of the mound probably signifies that the well attained a depth considerably more than normally expected and, therefore, the act of cutting the bucket loose from the rope may imply that the inhabitants of the besieged town are deprived of their main source of water originating from an important underground water system within the city, a feat noteworthy enough to be depicted on the bas-relief.⁹ The unusual mechanical device of rope and pulley must then be associated with the water system, which may have been situated in an area not too distant from the wall, since the rope and pulley appear in close conjunction with the architectural structure.

⁵ Cavalrymen depicted on a bas-relief of Ashurnasirpal II are probably to be identified with the Scythians, based upon their dress and unusual manner of shooting with the bow and arrow. T. Sulimirski, "Scythian Antiquities in Western Asia," *Artibus Asiae*, 17 (1954), pp. 290 ff.

⁶ Laessøe, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 1), p. 5.

⁷ For comments concerning the original drawings of the relief and related battle scenes, see C. J. Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria* (London, 1936), p. 144.

⁸ See comments by Laessøe, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 1), pp. 5-6.

⁹ A heavily fortified city under attack by the army of Ashurnasirpal II includes, among the many unusual details, soldiers in the act of tunneling through the outer walls; one is actually seen crawling through an opening: See A. Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia* (London & New York, 1969), pl. 267.

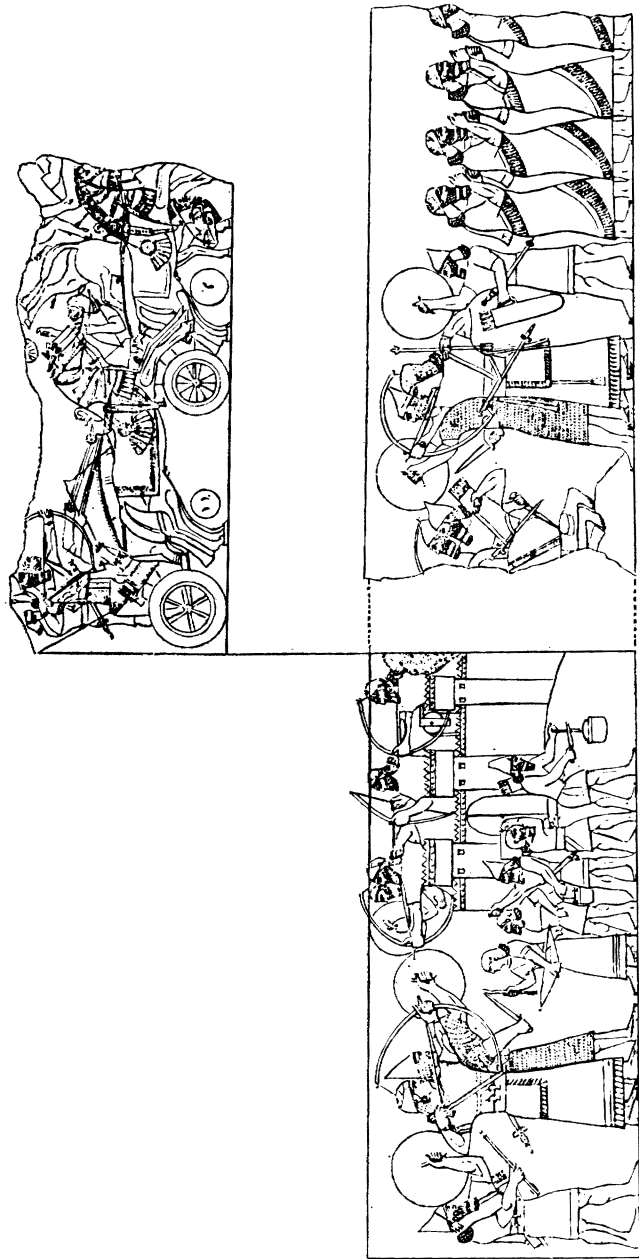


FIG. 2. Author's drawing, after C. J. Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria* (London, 1936), Pl. 4.

Excavations of biblical sites have revealed that large underground water systems within fortified cities were constructed in the second and first millennia B. C. The Late Bronze Age I water system found at Taanach,¹⁰ consisting of a square shaft and lower chamber, is significant for its prototypical relation to the Iron-Age shafts at Gibeon, Megiddo, and elsewhere. The largest of the type is the underground water system at Hazor, which was constructed to solve the problem of water supply in time of siege.¹¹ The system consists of three elements: the entrance structure to the shaft, the vertical shaft, and the tunnel, in all reaching a depth of some forty-two meters (138 feet). The date to which the building of this water system has been attributed is in the first half of the ninth century B. C.¹²

Sometime during the period when the water system at Hazor was constructed, Ashurnasirpal II led a campaign to the Mediterranean coast. The route described in his Annals makes it possible to trace his journey with some accuracy.¹³ After his departure from the royal city of Hattina, the Assyrian king crossed the Orontes and travelled through a mountain pass to the border fortress of that kingdom, which Ashurnasirpal II then claimed as his own. At this time, we may surmise that the Assyrian ruler initiated activities in nearby Mt. Lebanon¹⁴ for the securing of timber, which was subsequently used for the extensive building activities at Calah¹⁵ and Balawat.¹⁶ The need to maintain the Assyrian army resulted in a series of forays against neighboring communities, and these ventures were countered by attacks which, if we are correct in our belief, are illustrated on the Assyrian bas-reliefs originally located above the scene of the besieged city. The introduction of chariot warfare in these violent battles (Fig. 2, above), indicates the presence of a formidable enemy, well-equipped to counter-attack any large military force. The military strength that kingdoms in Palestine and Syria could assemble is attested by the coalition of twelve kings against the succeeding Assyrian ruler, Shalmaneser III. The greatest numbers of militia, comprising cavalry, chariotry, and foot soldiers, came from Damascus, Hamath, and Israel.¹⁷

¹⁰ P. W. Lapp, "The 1968 Excavations at Tell Ta'anek," *BULLETIN*, No. 195 (Oct., 1969), pp. 31-33.

¹¹ Y. Yadin, "The Fifth Season of Excavations at Hazor, 1968-69," *Biblical Archaeologist*, 32 (1969), p. 63 ff.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 70. For a discussion of the Gezer and Hazor water systems, see W. G. Dever, "The Water Systems at Hazor and Gezer," *Biblical Archaeologist*, 32 (1969), pp. 71-78.

¹³ J. B. Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, p. 276.

¹⁴ This area retained very substantial forest and was an important source of timber. See M. B. Rowton, "The Woodlands of Ancient Western Asia," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 26 (1967), pp. 269 ff.

¹⁵ Cf. J. B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, 1969), pp. 558-559.

¹⁶ D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, I, pp. 194-195.

¹⁷ Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 273-279. It may be useful to note that not till the time of Tiglathpileser III, during the eighth century B. C., is an Israelite city, namely Gezer, specifically identified by an inscription on an Assyrian bas-relief. H. D. Lance, "Gezer in the Land and in History," *Biblical Archaeologist*, 30 (1967), pp. 42-44.

After his departure from the region near Mt. Lebanon, Ashurnasirpal II continued his march by turning west to the Mediterranean coast, where he proceeded north through the coastal cities of Phoenicia and to the Amanus region.¹⁸ This was the first venture taken by an Assyrian king to the Mediterranean coast since the time of Tiglathpileser I, some two hundred years earlier.¹⁹ If, as we surmise, Ashurnasirpal II had no previous knowledge of, nor had been familiar with such a remarkable engineering accomplishment such as the underground water system found at Hazor, then the subsequent successful action of cutting off the supply of water from a gigantic water system within a fortified city was surely an event that deserved to be recorded on the bas-reliefs. It seems reasonable to suppose, too, that the Assyrian artist intended the depiction of the fortified town to be associated with a particular region since, as we noted earlier, no city is mentioned by name on this and all other bas-reliefs depicting the campaigns of Ashurnasirpal II.²⁰

Two further details on the Assyrian bas-relief under discussion deserve attention. The first concerns the costume worn by the subjugated personages who are led away. They wear headbands that broaden at the front, and are attired in a long dress over which a wide mantle fringed at the ends is draped diagonally around the body, terminating over the left shoulder. The closest parallel to be found, displaying a similar type of garment, is that worn by the Israelite attendants on the "Black Obelisk" of Shalmaneser III where, however, the wide headband is replaced with a conical cap.²¹ Moreover, since these persons move from left to right, instead of right to left, we are shown the costume as it appears on the opposite side of the body. The second detail deals with the unusual decoration shown on the walls of the city, consisting of the band of discs with a central dot, a detail which recurs on several other fortified cities represented on the reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II.²² This motif appears again on the early seventh century B. C. bas-relief illustrating the attack against Lachish by the Assyrian army of Sennacherib.²³ Here the discs are more elaborately drawn, showing them to be round shields with a central boss. Their changed position on the walls of the city indicates a further development by the Israelites to ensure better protection during times of defensive warfare.²⁴

As noted above, the rope and pulley is to be associated with an underground water system. Its invention may coincide with the underground water systems developed during the Late Bronze-Age and Early

¹⁸ For the northern routes followed in antiquity, see U. Bahadır Alkım, "The Amanus Region in Turkey," *Archaeology*, 22 (1969), pp. 280-281.

¹⁹ D. J. Wiseman, "Assyria and Babylonia, c. 1200-1000 B. C.," *Cambridge Ancient History*, II, Chap. XXXI (rev. ed., 1965), pp. 20-21.

²⁰ See, however, the decorated bands of bronze from Balawat, belonging to the same period, where the identification of cities is given. Luckenbill, *ARA*, I, p. 196.

²¹ Cf. E. Strommenger, *5000 Years of the Art of Mesopotamia* (New York, 1965), pl. 208, pp. 441-442.

²² Moortgat, *loc. cit.* (*supra* n. 9).

²³ A. Paterson, *Assyrian Sculptures in the Palace of Sennacherib* (The Hague, 1915), pls. 68-70, 77.

²⁴ Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands*, Vol. II (New York, 1963), pp. 326-327.

Iron-Age Israelite period. In his description of the working of the *čerd*, Laessøe pointed out that the power is furnished by domestic animals which are provided with a steeply inclined ramp down which they walk. Interestingly, at Hazor the exaggerated width of the rock-cut staircase of the shaft has raised the possibility that water was drawn by pack animals descending and ascending simultaneously.²⁵ It seems feasible to suggest that such animals were utilized in the shaft at Hazor for working a *čerd*, constructed in conjunction with the underground water system. In view of the preceding observations, we conclude that the conjecture that the *čerd* was an Egyptian invention is unconvincing and propose, instead, to consider it a Palestinian invention.

BOOK NOTICES

The BULLETIN publishes from time to time brief review notices of books on the archaeology, history, literature, and languages of the ancient Near East, and on the relation of these fields to biblical studies. Books for notice should be sent directly to the editor, Delbert R. Hillers, Dept. of Near Eastern Studies, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland 21218, U. S. A. Books on Palestinian archaeology and closely related fields should, however, be sent to the Director, Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Box 19096, Jerusalem, Israel; after review, these books will be added to the Institute Library.

Unless otherwise indicated, notices are by the editor.

One of the last honors accorded the lamented Prof. William F. Albright was a Festschrift on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. The handsome, substantial volume, edited by Hans Goedicke of the Johns Hopkins University, is titled *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins, 1971; pp. xxviii + 473; \$15.00). A tribute to Dr. Albright by his long-time associate, Wendell Phillips, is followed by articles on a very wide variety of topics, by 34 distinguished contributors. It being impossible to describe all the contributions, perhaps one example may be singled out, Thomas O. Lambdin's "The Junctural Origin of the West Semitic Definite Article," a brilliant, imaginative treatment of the subject, likely to be of permanent importance for Semitic studies.

Students, colleagues, and friends of Prof. F. V. Winnett have presented him, on the occasion of his retirement, with a volume in his honor: *Studies on the Ancient Palestinian World*, Toronto Semitic Texts and Studies, 2, edd. J. W. Wevers and D. B. Redford (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972; pp. xii + 171). Out of the varied contents, readers of the BULLETIN will perhaps be especially interested in J. B. Pritchard's study of an incense-burner from Tell es-Sa'idiyeh, in W. L. Reed's treatment of the archaeological history of Elealeh, in A. K. Grayson's publication of a new text of Cylinder C of Sin-šarra-iškun, and in Redford's study of the taxation system of Solomon in the light of Egyptian practices.

Solomonic State Officials: A Study of the Civil Government Officials of the Israelite Monarchy, Conjectanea biblica, Old Testament Series, 5 (Gleerup: Lund, 1971; pp. xiv + 186; price not stated) is the doctoral dissertation of Trygve N. D. Mettinger. A thorough examination of the subject, one of its main conclusions is the familiar notion that the Egyptian administration provided the prototypes for some of the civil government offices in Israel. One may read Redford's study, mentioned just above, for brief expression of a dissenting view.

²⁵ Yadin, *Biblical Archaeologist*, 32 (1969), p. 66.